

Women Don't Really Want it, Or at least they shouldn't:

Organizing differently to combat the gendered discourses surrounding promotion and negotiating which marginalize and exclude women

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Reading the popular press, it often seems that women don't really want raises or promotions—or at least they shouldn't. Quite often, when we read about the persistent pay gap of thirty cents on the dollar between full year full time women workers compared to men--a pay gap that hasn't changed for ten years¹--or when we read that the percentage of women in senior management has actually gone down in the last decade², the discussion is framed in terms of women's choices. Women don't really want it, the game isn't worth the candle, there are better things to do with our lives than to want more money and a better position at work. But do women really think about promotion and negotiating in those terms? And if we don't, what can we do about it?

To answer this, I will first discuss how these gendered discourses surrounding promotion and negotiating either erase women [to succeed women must be the same as men] or marginalize women [if women are different than men then they are constructed as lesser]. These discourses, or ways of thinking, aren't just idle chatter we share over coffee; they are deeply embedded in how we get work done together. They not only provide the framework within which we think; they shape what we do, and in turn how we explain it.

That leads me into the second part of the paper, where I will examine two ways of confronting those discourses of erasure and marginalization that are deeply embedded in the processes of promotion and negotiating. One way is focused on the more precise and transparent application of rules and regulations surrounding promotion and negotiation, although it remains classically hierarchical in its acceptance of organizational structure, or the way we relate to each other to get work done. The other way is focused on rethinking hierarchy in favour of

¹ See The Standing Committee on the Status of Women, 21st report to the Government of Canada (2007), *Improving the Economic security of Women*, Chapter 3: Economic Security of Women—the Income Side, Figure 3.1: Female to Male Earnings, ratio of full time workers, 1967-2004. As the authors note, "this ratio of women to men's earnings is seemingly stuck at 70%, with very little change over the last decade"; they go on to point out that "this gap in earnings persists across all levels of education and professions".

² See Statistics Canada Women and Work website, Table 11: Distribution of employment by occupation, 1987, 1996, 2006.

contiguous ways of working together. It is as a way of more directly confronting how erasure and marginalization operate, because these discourses that erase or marginalize women in promotion and negotiation are embodied in all our processes of organizing. To examine them is not to lay bare what individual women lack, and then to argue that in order to succeed women just need to become more like men, since to be different from men is to be lesser, the usual approach to organizational analysis. Instead, it is about how power circulates in our organizing processes, who says what and why, who benefits from the circulation of these arguments, and how we might change this through organizing differently, contiguously rather than hierarchically.

Here I want to be quite clear: I want to emphasize that this analysis is not based on the sexless individual, the usual or pre-eminent category of organizational analysis, this sexless individual who is in reality male, and then simply extrapolated to women. Nor is it based on ignoring the processes of organizing in favour of changing individuals and their behaviour. I don't focus on 'what is wrong with women, and how they can be fixed', usually, if not very subtly, about remaking women in ways that make men comfortable, either just like them-- 'one of the guys'-or as a projection of what men want and need women to be--lesser than them. Instead, I examine the processes of organizing, or the ways we come together to get work done: deciding what to do, how to do it and by whom, and how to evaluate what we've done, using what criteria, then analysing these organizing processes for how they can include rather than exclude. I confront 'the same' as the unacknowledged male norm which women are either supposed to be like in order to succeed in organizations, or are judged against [and found wanting, in the same way the imitation is never as good as the real]. I reveal it as a mechanism deeply embedded in how we organize which ensures that women are confronted with two choices at work, neither of them good: women can be the same as men--erasing themselves--or they can be different—and lesser. In this paper I want to move beyond this tyranny of the either/or to rethink how we might work together in contiguous rather than hierarchical ways, ways that do not demand that women remain imprisoned within 'the same' or 'the lesser', but ways that reveal how to work together which do not constantly recreate the hierarchies of either erasure or marginalization that women seek to escape³.

³ My argument about the hierarchical relationship of sameness/difference is based on the work of the French philosopher Luce Irigaray, who focuses on the lack of representation in our symbolic structures of 'sexual difference', a category of analysis which is not represented or symbolized in the frameworks within which we think and through which we name our actions. Instead, we have the category of sexual indifference, of sameness, what Irigaray calls 'the mask of the masculine neutral', where men stand in for women, but women themselves have no place in our representative structures other than as lesser. In organizational analysis this category of sexual indifference means that women must be the same as men in

Part 1

Women don't really want it—or at least they shouldn't: Gendered arguments surrounding promotion, women, and work

It probably isn't much of a surprise to most of us to recognize that just as a sexual double standard still exists for women and men, so does a double standard at work, where doing [or wanting] the same things has quite different implications depending on whether you're a woman or a man. We can see how this work double standard is deeply embedded in the arguments surrounding promotion, arguments which can be summarized as 'women don't really want it, or at least they shouldn't'—descriptions which really resonate with women not stepping out of line or not knowing their place, common phrases that literally reveal women's expected place at work. In one of the best articles I have read on these gendered arguments⁴ surrounding promotion, 'Distorted Views through the Glass Ceiling⁵: The construction of women's understandings of promotion and senior management positions', Sonia Liff and Kate Ward (2001) argue that women are being told by

order to equal [but are erased]; if they are different than men, they are lesser. 'My fellow Canadians' is a classic example, where women are only accepted into the public world as honorary men, or the term 'actor' applied to women and understood as a gesture of equality to men rather than as a mechanism for erasure. In our symbolic structures, 'actress' is understood as lesser than 'actor', the preferred—and male--term. See Irigaray (1985, 1993a, 1993b, 1994, 2000, 2004); Gross [1986, 1990, 1993]; Burke et al [1994]; The Milan Women's Bookstore Collective [1990].

⁴ The concept of 'gendered arguments' underpins the notion of the construction of 'ideal workers' [women are ideally suited to the low paid manufacture of widgets because of their small fingers and fine motor control, but not highly paid surgery], and is reflected in the phrase 'ideological dilemmas', or the reconciliation of women's subordination at work by emphasizing that it's women's choice. See in particular Yvonne Benschop et al (1998), Janne Tiernari et al. (2002); Ozbilgin, M. & Woodward, D. (2004); and Smith, J. P. & Dumas, T. L. (2007).

⁵ The 'glass ceiling' is a term many of us are familiar with, although I prefer 'a thick layer of men' as more truthful because it's less disembodied—the erasure of who exactly is doing what to whom is always an operation of power. 'A thick layer of men' is the ascerbic comment made on the glass ceiling by an organizational equity analyst in the very funny, if sobering, Canadian documentary of what faces ambitious women in 'Her Brilliant Career' [2005], who wanted to state much more concretely who does what to whom. Like many organizational concepts that are not embodied, the term 'glass ceiling' does not speak truth to power; we remove who is doing what to whom, and it hampers our ability both to identify and to solve the problem.

those at the top, mostly men, that it's too hard for them to be managers that the hours are too long⁶, that they're not going to be capable of balancing life and work, that they would have to sacrifice their other lives in order to succeed—so they might as well not even apply for promotion. What Liff and Ward actually found, however, is that it all depends. Based on more than 50 interviews with both women and men senior and junior banking managers, life at the top wasn't about all work all the time: it was more about increased flexibility along with some additional time, but not much, and certainly not as much as they were led to believe. While managers indeed worked longer—but only on average an hour a day, not the eight or ten sometimes feared—they also found they had much more flexibility. These managers stressed to Liff and Ward that greater control over their time gave them greater ability to decide how and when to do things, so they were more able to juggle, not less; they were more able to figure out how to fit things in [whatever those things might be], not less able⁷. Time proved to be more elastic, and less constraining, than what they'd been told. What it meant for women managers in particular is that they were indeed able to do what they had feared they wouldn't be able to do: manage all aspects of their lives, not lop off the parts that wouldn't fit. And it wasn't because they were now working 16 hour days, but that they had more control over their work lives.

That raises the interesting question: Who benefits from this kind of argument? Those who are already there, and in most cases who are the same as those who've been there for a long time, who don't want those at the bottom who are different to get too pushy [born out by statistics—the percentage of senior managers in Canada who are women has actually declined over the last 5 years⁸]. It's an argument that serves to benefit men and sideline women, and it works on two levels: it maintains that to be a manager you're working all the time, as it re-emphasizes that women's

⁶The Economist [September 24, 2005] compared hours at work for the OECD countries between 1990-2004. The most competitive countries do not necessarily work the longest hours: Finland is the most competitive, with Sweden and Norway just behind. All three countries work many fewer hours and are more competitive than the Anglo American economies; Norway and Sweden also have long, and well-paid, paternity and maternity leaves. As well, the number of hours worked declined between 1990-2004 in almost all of the OECD countries.

⁷ This is an argument made by Leslie Perlow (2003) of the Harvard Business School, who points out in her research on China, India and Hungary that there were many ways of working effectively, and long hours were not necessary in order to get things done. There are other reasons than efficiency and effectiveness for the Anglo-American long hours work cultures, which are underscored by the winners in the competitiveness and productivity statistics.

⁸ See Statistics Canada Women and Work website, Table 11: Distribution of employment by occupation, 1987, 1996, 2006.

main focus is her family, her nearest and dearest, and if it isn't, she's not a real woman. Women, then, are caught in a bind. If they want that promotion, they're going to have to work all the time [despite evidence that's not the case]. To boot, they're not going to be good women, because by definition, a good woman—as constructed by this argument—isn't ambitious because she can't be. For a good woman, her family always comes first [whatever she may think or want herself].

In her excellent book, *Willing Slaves, How the Overwork Culture is Ruling our Lives* [2004], Madelaine Bunting identifies the same conundrum, and names it. To Bunting, this culture of overwork is a covert way of ensuring through 'presentism' that those who want to leave work after a day's work aren't seen as committed—and therefore, they're not worthy of promotion. In a sleight of hand, simply being there has replaced actually getting work done. As she points out in a comparison of British to French productivity, the French are both more productive for the hours they do work, as well as working shorter hours: long hours obviously do not mean greater efficiency. However, a culture of presentism and long hours does make it harder for those who focus on getting work done as efficiently as possible, and then leaving. As women's labour force participation has risen dramatically⁹, Bunting argues that using long hours as a proxy for commitment and linking that to promotion is a covert way of keeping women in their place. Put succinctly: you can't keep women out of the labour force, but you can keep them down, by stressing that you can't be promoted if you can't commit to long hours—which, equally covertly, are neither necessary [think of the extra hour, not eight] nor true—long hours doesn't equal greater productivity. Like the movie of the same name, it's just about Being There as a substitute for actually getting anything done.

The use of irrelevant arguments to derail close analysis of how women are subordinated at work is apparent in another analysis, 'Opt Out or Pushed Out' [2006]. This analysis of how the media covers the 'work-life balance' reveals, like Liff and Ward and Bunting, that the arguments used to justify what happens to women in the workplace are not very closely related to the facts. Women are 'pushed out' by inflexible organizations; they do not 'opt out', but the argument is the same old, same old: women 'choose' to leave. In 'Opt Out or Pushed Out', the authors analyse how over the course of two decades the mainstream press in the US emphasized entirely the wrong aspects about why so few women were being promoted to higher positions in organizations. Like the other arguments laid bare by Liff and Ward and Bunting, these as well were crafted around women's supposed choice to leave in order to fulfill their deepest needs—their families. Instead, 'Opt Out or Pushed Out' stresses that in reality what pushed women out of organizations

⁹ See Statistics Canada Women and Work website, Table 1: Employment, 1976-2006; Table 2: Percentage of Population aged 15 and over, employed by province, 1976-2006.

was a lack of flexibility in the way work was accomplished¹⁰. Organizations dressed up their desire to continue to do things in a way that suited the unacknowledged male norm that underlies many ways of working, maintaining that these ways were universal, without bias, neutral. If meetings had to be held until 7 or 8 pm, then nothing could be changed; it had always been done this way, it had to continue to be done this way. That was what 'Opt Out or Pushed Out' took issue with. The real problem for women wishing to ascend the ladder was not women choosing family over work¹¹; that was a convenient ruse for organizations to hide behind both their unwillingness to change how they did things as well as their equal unwillingness to promote women, who might change things in ways those in power didn't want.

That unwillingness to promote, and of course its link to the perpetuation of the pay gap despite women's increasing level of education and experience compared to men¹², is explored in "A study of the promotion to partner process in a professional services firm: How women are disadvantaged" [Kumra & Vinnicombe, 2008]. The presence of the same double standards, the same gendered arguments which Liff and Ward explored in their earlier study, surfaced in this study as well. The rules of the game were quite different for women than for men¹³: in order to get ahead,

¹⁰ Unlike in the Second World War, for example, when women were needed, and lots of organizations figured out what to do to keep women working—and that is now nearly 70 years ago. See Alison Prentice et al [1988], *Canadian Women, A history*, especially sections 3 and 4.

¹¹ Only a vanishingly small percentage of women could choose to do that, never made clear in these articles, which always emphasized implicitly the fond and affluent husband hovering in the background, never to divorce. First of all, few Canadian families rely on one income earner, and they tend to be affluent. Secondly, in these scenarios, there's never any mention of divorce [See Statistics Canada, *Women and Work* website, Table 5: Percentage of women with children employed by age of youngest child, 1976-2006; Table 6: Employment of Women with children by family status and age of youngest child, 1976-2006]. The articles surveyed in 'Opt Out or Pushed Out' stressed that women chose; the reality was that women were pushed out because of the intransigence of the organizations, coupled with a divorce rate that made pushed out women economically vulnerable if they had been pushed out of these organizations.

¹² Stats Canada, *Women and Work*, Table 3: Percentage Employed by age and educational attainment, 2006; Table 4: Percentage Employed by age, 1976-2006

¹³ This is explored as well in Shaw and Hoeber's (2003) evocatively titled paper, 'A Strong Man is Direct, but a Strong Woman is a Bitch', on the work double standard, where what is rewarded for men is punished for women. This in turn works to maintain who, exactly, is ideal for what job; women are needed to be hard workers so they can serve, but they must not try and use their hard work and competence to

'people' had to be known by 'the people' above. However, it was vastly easier for men to strut their stuff, and much more difficult for women, since to do so was to be a 'pushy broad'¹⁴--and pushy broads are asking to be put in their place, since they are supposed to know enough not to ask, not to push, not to advertise themselves as competent. This process of self-advertisement, then, although crucial for promotion to partner, has quite different implications for women than for men. If those who want to make partner are supposed to advertise their interest and their accomplishments, but men are rewarded and women are punished¹⁵, then it's very difficult for women¹⁶.

How the absence of women is both created in the fact of our organizations and denied by our arguments is reflected in the documentary *Her Brilliant Career* [2005], which I've mentioned previously. A well-dressed young man is sitting with an older man, an obvious mentor, over a very nice lunch. All the women in the shot are waitresses; they are there to serve, but not to sit as equals at the table, an analogy—and a vivid picture—of what happens to women at work in their pursuit of a promotion. The glass ceiling--or a thick layer of men—continues to hold sway,

move upward. Men, however, don't need to work so hard because their job is to direct.

¹⁴ This is something that Babcock and Laschever (2007) wrote about as well in their analysis of negotiating pay raises, what happens to women and why, in their book 'Women Don't Ask'.

¹⁵ This differential reward for men but punishment for women is very similar to Guy and Newman's (2004) findings about emotional labour and emotional intelligence: women are expected to do emotional labour and be emotionally intelligent, but are not rewarded. They are, however, punished if they don't. Men are not expected to do emotional labour or to be emotionally intelligent, but they are rewarded if they do or are—but not punished. The Emotional Intelligence literature, particularly the well known books by Daniel Goleman [1995] and Stephen Fineman [2003], fails to confront this conundrum: that what worked for Bill Clinton, the great empathizer, was used against Hilary Clinton, who did not exhibit great empathy, and was punished for it. See also Glombe, et. al [2004].

¹⁶ Not only are women more likely to be discouraged from advertising their accomplishments, crucial if they are to advance, but they are also not provided with the kinds of opportunities that make it easy for them to advance—the micro-inequities first coined by Mary Rowe [1990] at MIT, observing the polite but cold unwelcome directed towards a black woman colleague in the 1970s. So not only are women punished for 'bragging', which equals being a 'pushy broad'; they are also not provided with the opportunities where they can shine.

buttressed by arguments which ultimately work to reaffirm that women don't really want it—or at least they shouldn't: Women's place is to serve, not to direct.

Negotiation: [Why] Women Don't Ask—Or At Least Why They Shouldn't: Don't Threaten the Boys

The same gendered arguments that surround women in their quest for promotion are apparent when women negotiate: for more money, for promotions, for better working conditions. Women are told, both explicitly and implicitly, that's they are not supposed to ask, and if they do, they're punished: don't beat the boys at their game. We don't often think about negotiation in these terms, but we need to. We think of negotiation in the same way as we think about promotion, as 'gender free' [and who do you know without a sex?], outside power relations, but we need to analyse how power circulates in all our arguments about promotion or negotiation, as power shapes how we think, and ultimately, how we think we should act.

In 'Women Don't Ask', Linda Babcock and Sara Laschever [2007]¹⁷ analyse both why women don't negotiate, and what happens to women if they do: simply put, women get punished for asking, since they're not supposed to; they're supposed to be content with what they've got, what they've been given. If women do ask for more, they jeopardize their likeability--and their likeability is based on not asking, because to ask is to be pushy, and therefore not likeable. We could ask here 'Who cares?', or 'So what?', but not to be likeable, as Babcock and Laschever stress, has much more serious implications for women at work than for men at work, so it's a double bind, an entanglement where doing the thing which is necessary to achieving the goal prevents the achievement of the goal, a Kafkaesque outcome. Pointing to a wide variety of studies, Babcock and Laschever [p. 96] stress that women are judged less likeable if they're assertive, whereas men are judged equally likeable whether they're assertive or passive. In other words, men's likeability is not linked to 'asking for more' or 'for stepping out of line' but women's is. This obviously has real implications if women are going to negotiate for more money or a promotion or better working conditions, since this is also coupled with the imprimatur that women not stand out, that they be the same as their male compatriots, that they not be different because to be different for women is to be lesser.

However, if women can't stand out—and are punished if they do—how can they be seen as having the necessary competencies that are the basis for promotion? Women aren't allowed to trumpet their successes: Women are punished for 'bragging', whereas men are simply demonstrating their competence. Since women

¹⁷ See especially Chapters 3, 'Nice Girls don't ask', 4, 'Scaring the Boys' and 5, 'Fear of Asking', in *Women Don't Ask*, [2007].

(despite any evidence to the contrary) are routinely seen as less competent, with fewer abilities and skills, to be punished for demonstrating their competencies, skills and abilities, forces women into a position where they can only lose.

Many women deal with this unspoken form of punishment by thinking [hoping?] that their work will be recognized by others as meritorious. It's both a re-affirmation of the merit principle, and a reluctance to confront the fact that if they do emphasize what they have accomplished, they threaten the men. Punishment always hovers in the background.

Women are caught in the double standard that is the context in which negotiation occurs for them. They must negotiate within this context in which women are seen as less competent by men and some women, and therefore must be more forward [or pushy] than men in emphasizing their accomplishments and abilities. However, if they do so, they are punished for stepping out of line, for not accepting their place.

To continue this analysis of double standards at work, 'people' are supposed to be confident, assertive, sure of the worth of what they have done and sure about what they are capable of. But women are punished for being assertive, confident, sure of themselves, proud of their accomplishments. Women who are all of those things are seen by men in particular as bossy, domineering and unlikeable. Women rightly conclude that to be unlikeable, bossy and domineering has worse long term consequences. So to negotiate for more, may actually result in less.

However, Babcock and Laschever stress that if women are silent, if they don't blow their own horn, if they rely on hope that hard work and good work will be recognized, they are simply seen as less competent, and therefore not worthy of a raise or a promotion. What happens if they do talk assertively? If they do, they are seen as aggressive; men are not. In a series of fascinating studies, this finding was born out [p. 98]. Trained actors and actresses, using exactly the same script, which emphasized being a pleasant and straightforward leader in a group, were judged differently depending on their sex. Bossy and domineering labels were attached to the women, but intelligent to the men. What was equally fascinating [remember this is the reaction to a script] is that the respondents, both women and men, denied that they were in any way biased against women, a sobering conclusion to the sobering analysis of Women Don't Ask¹⁸.

Linked to this focus on how women are punished for speaking out in pursuit of what they want are other studies that focused on how whatever women worked at was devalued, since women did it. It's devaluation as a form of punishment, a refusal to

¹⁸ In a related study on 'Racism without Racists', Nicholas Kristof of the New York Times [2008] states that "for decades, experiments have shown even many whites who earnestly believe in equal rights will recommend hiring a white job candidate more often than a person with identical credentials who is black". What is also interesting is that in the US, black men make more money than white women.

admit to any form of equality, captured in the phrase 'If women did it, it couldn't be hard; 'anybody' could do it [meaning whom, exactly?]. That meant for women, [but not for men, where the reverse held] that it was hard to ask for more money, since by definition the work wasn't worth much, since women were doing it. These findings were replicated in the analyses of equal pay for work of equal value studies done by Joan Acker [1989, 1990] and Linda Blum [1991]. Their studies led them to make the same point: that it was because women were doing the work--whatever that work was-- that resulted in the devaluation of that work. Acker, in particular, pessimistically concluded that there was no way for women to benefit from these kinds of analyses of equal value, since whatever women did, the criteria itself shifted to ensure that the work done by women was deemed lesser. In a somewhat startling example of the devaluation of whatever it was that women were doing, Babcock and Laschever point out that when women auditioned for symphony positions behind a screen, the percentage of women rose 250% [p. 103]. Unfortunately, most promotions can't be granted on the basis of a screen: women have to be face to face with their evaluators, who, like the study indicated earlier, will likely vociferously deny that they are in any way biased against women.

The arguments, as Babcock and Laschever point out, hinge on women's work being devalued since women do it, which in turn was both linked to and reinforced by the notion that women's work held to a higher standard than men to be seen as good [or as Charlotte Whitton, the famously ascerbic Ottawa mayor stated: 'Women have to be twice as good as men; luckily that's not difficult']. Punishment was not just doled out for asking for more; punishment was also deeply embedded in the devaluation of women's work, and in a higher standard applied to women but not to men. As they point out, women in the workplace are paid less than men, it takes women longer to rise up the ladder than men, and women don't rise as high as men: the ceiling is lower for women. Negotiation for higher salaries and better positions takes place within this context, of devaluation and consistent punishment for stepping out of line, for demanding more. Even in Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, it was a boy who asked, not a girl: the punishment, as the girls knew, would have been even more ferocious for them, and that goes a long way to explaining why, indeed, women don't even ask¹⁹.

¹⁹ One of the stories that Babcock and Laschever repeat is the firestorm of disapproval that attended the Canadian super model Linda Evangelista's statement that 'she didn't get out of bed for less than \$10,000' [p. 107]. As they point out, this was during one of Wall Street's periodic celebrations of red suspended men's stratospheric salaries, immortalized in Gordon Gecko's 'greed is good'. What was celebrated for men was punished for women. Evangelista apologized again and again for violating a gender norm, but ruefully admitted it would probably be carved on her gravestone. Not only are women not supposed to ask, they're not supposed to get.

Part 2: Organizing Differently: But How Differently?

Using the rules designed to keep women out, but keeping the hierarchy

How, then, to deal with those arguments which are subtly or not so subtly about women knowing their place? In ostensibly neutral organizing processes, ostensibly neutral rules and regulations, it's easy to maintain the focus on what's wrong with women by asking questions like 'Why aren't women stepping forward for promotion?' 'Why don't they negotiate for more money?' But if we move from focusing on the individual to examining the processes of organizing not only do we broaden our analysis. Focusing on the processes allows us to examine how the arguments used to marginalize and exclude women are deeply embedded in the ways we do things. These arguments both create and maintain these ways of working together; they stem from the same desire to keep women at fault for not doing more, while the processes themselves remain unanalyzed.

Penny Stewart and Janice Drakich (1994) take those organizing processes to task, although not to reconfigure them, an argument I will take up shortly. Instead, they turn these processes into a set of rules that must be followed. They take what had been slippery, amenable to many interpretations, and define them, turn them into a form of 'work to rule', make them into the fullest expression of the rules. In the process, they render transparent what had been opaque, they make apparent exactly who has power and who doesn't, they put an end to decisions made in a back room by a few using criteria determined by them alone. They are concerned with the subversion of the existing rules and regulations, which were designed to promote those who are just like those already in power, in order to turn them inside out to benefit those who are not. Their intent is to reveal the process by which rules and regulations, the minutiae of any large organization, can be made to reveal the repression that is at its heart, and to use that revelatory process to advance those whom the rules and regulations were supposed to keep out.

In their study of how to increase diversity at Ontario universities, Stewart and Drakich were particularly concerned with detailing how the barriers to hiring and promoting women could be overcome. To do so, they focused on the rules of the organization--as both the place of resistance and the mechanism through which the formerly excluded could be advanced. If power is everywhere and nowhere, as the French philosopher Michel Foucault argues²⁰, it is most likely resisted everywhere and nowhere, in the rules, procedures and mechanisms that are the organization. Those same nodes of power that keep women in their place can be used to advance women, the process turned against itself, a feudal bureaucracy predicated on the exclusion of women liberated for emancipatory ends.

²⁰ For feminist analyses of Foucault, I have drawn on Bartky (1990); Hekman (1990); Gross[z] (1986, 1990, 1993); and Deveaux (1994).

To turn the rules onto themselves, Stewart and Drakich argued that a full time equity officer was crucial, but not to do endless study. Instead, the equity officer was to ensure that the rules are indeed followed: from the initial discussions of the wording of the advertisement, to ensuring that the advertisement itself was widely distributed, that the interviewing questions were vetted, and that the interviewers were taught how to read letters of reference [which are less glowing for women than for men with the same achievements]. Equity officers were to do more than monitor numbers; they were to ensure that hiring and promotion committees are called to account at every step. Finally and most importantly, they were to stress that if all the steps were not followed, monitored and justified using transparent criteria, then hiring and promotion decisions could be revoked by the decision makers at the top. Rather than argue the more esoteric points, Stewart and Drakich focused on strict adherence to the rules, which in the classical move of work to rule, subverts them. However, they do point out that in order to begin this process of subversion, organizations must have a committed group of feminists and men sympathetic to feminism--in other words, a body to lobby--and someone in the administration with clout who is committed to diversity. They point to one Ontario university with a committed president and successful implementation of the process of strict adherence to rules of fairness, and to one Ontario university with a president who stated that he found this focus on increasing diversity reverse discrimination. At that university, the process failed. It is a sobering insight into hierarchical relations constituting and reconstituting relations of domination and subordination, and how easily difference is squashed in the absence of a commitment to egalitarian relations.

Stewart and Drakich recognize that an "equity culture"²¹ must be put in place if people who are different from the already there are to be welcomed, but they are most concerned with numbers and with process. In that sense, theirs is an excellent reply to the gendered arguments surrounding promotion and negotiation. They recognize that in organizations, and certainly professional and academic ones, reason has been dressed in a number of ways to maintain privilege, or to put that

²¹ Rubin (1997), Woodruff [1997], and Liff and Cameron (1997) make the same points in their articles on achieving 'equity cultures'. They first focus on the rules and how they must be followed carefully, and the kind of training that is required in order to accomplish that. However, they go on to stress that despite this careful training, there is generally no acknowledgement that applying the rules, even very carefully by carefully trained people, will not necessarily reveal that they are based on the unacknowledged male way of working, the unacknowledged male norm against which women are judged and found wanting. For example, as Rubin points out, talking about sports is fine in an employment interview: that is neutral, seen as a way of demonstrating that 'you're a team player'. But talking about work/life balance reveals difference from the norm, and implies that you may not be really committed.

another way, gendered arguments which have quite different implications for women than for men are used to maintain a structure which privileges men. However, what they leave intact is the hierarchical structure which by itself reconstitutes the other as lesser. Although we don't often use these terms, preferring leaders and subordinates, for example, relations of domination and subordination are built into hierarchical relations--as much as we would like to erase our own knowledge of that, just as we like to erase our own knowledge of how otherness as lesser is a necessary part of any hierarchy, which we then justify rather than attempt to dismantle.

Contiguous organizing in order to combat the inherent hierarchies of the double standard at work, or men preferred, women punished

This is precisely the problem that Helen Brown (1991) struggles with in her analysis of how to achieve non-hierarchical or contiguous organizing: the circulation of power as it constructs ranked differences among people who work together, and the hierarchical structures which those ranked differences embody, the 'you are less/more than me' that any organizational pyramid depends on. To Brown, dealing with difference in the workplace cannot be separated from restructuring the workplace in order to minimize hierarchy. She argues that power exists not only in the structure of the organization, but in the differences among workers, however those differences are defined, and therefore those differences must be minimized if hierarchies are not to be inevitably reconstructed.

Brown's solution to this problem of how difference itself constantly recreates hierarchy is to minimize hierarchical relations among workers by focusing on how all the processes or skills of organizing can be shared. By teaching, learning and sharing all the processes of organizing, none of which as shared skills need to be hierarchically ranked [including the processes or activities of decision making, consensus and responsibility building, articulating and reconciling dissent, strategizing, evaluating and leading], a group can learn to work together contiguously rather than hierarchically. She does not mean by this that we are all must teach, learn and share tasks like accounting or computing. What she means is that we teach, learn and share the skills of organizing our work so that we can get things done together, meet our goals together, move ahead together. Thus, by stressing the necessary involvement of everyone in all aspects of organizing our work together through skill-sharing, she provides a way for organizations to get things done together without [re]constructing relations of domination and subordination, however we might justify them.

Brown makes quite clear that she is not talking about the absence of structure; she is talking about how to create contiguity rather than hierarchy. Her analysis rests on the notion that the social order, or how we relate to each other, either

contiguously or hierarchically, is negotiated--and as such always involves struggle. We have to work at it, think about it, be mindful about what we're doing and why: that we want to work together in much more egalitarian ways so that we do not create difference as lesser, however we define difference.

She takes pains to point out, however, that although negotiating is not something that is bereft of struggle or conflict, it is not only or primarily antagonistic. In the process of negotiating, decisions [about what to do and how to do it, and then what to do next, the basic building blocks of organizing] are made "through a process of consensus which encourages dissent" (Ibid, p. 16), what I re-phrase as the articulation and reconciliation of dissent. It is a process of decision making which is repetitive, reflective and political. It is not a process that is complacent or innate, spontaneous, or natural. It is work and struggle, not a happy anarchy that just emerges, thus requiring no analysis, no confrontation with who has power and who doesn't, no determination to work together in egalitarian ways. Most importantly, it is in these organizing activities, none of which are ranked, that we have to find a way of "managing a priori differences between individuals" (Ibid, p. 17), however these differences might be described and categorized. The question then becomes how do we figure out how to deploy these differences so that hierarchy is not constructed and reconstructed on the basis of those differences?

To Brown the answer lies in understanding organizing as a process. It is not the organization which exists, but the organizing activities which give it the temporary retrospective fixing which allow us to define a structure which is itself a construct of meaning, a taken for granted set of assumptions which allow us to act within the illusion of a structure. But this structure, as illusionary as it is, can be hierarchical or non-hierarchical; this set of assumptions is both literally and figuratively the outcome of our organizing activities that are either kept separate or shared among us. In her discussion of these organizing activities Brown is careful to make no real distinction other than to use the names already familiar to us, of doing, working, assessing, strategizing, evaluating and leading--all are activities which can be taught to each other, learned from each other, shared with each other, and negotiated between us.

Essentially what Brown is arguing is that we have to decide together how we're going to work together: only by being committed to a flattened, more egalitarian way of working together will we be able to dismantle those relations of domination and subordination which characterize the relations of men and women at work, and which underscore that if women are to succeed at work they have to adhere to the male norm. As we have seen in the studies of promotion and negotiation, women are caught in a work double standard. If they act like men, they are punished. If they act differently than men, they are seen as lesser, and go nowhere. I argue that simply working to rule, ensuring that the rules are followed to their fullest extent, in a hierarchical organization won't result in much change at all. It still depends on the beneficence from the top, a good king rather than a bad king--and all it takes is a change in the Crown for everything to go back to the way that it was.

Instead of revamped feudalism at work, what we need is participatory democracy or contiguous organizing, and organizing that goes further and confronts patriarchy in all its hierarchical forms, including the gendered arguments encased in promotion and negotiation that punish women for doing the same things that men are rewarded for. These are arguments that always and inevitably reconstitute the same, the unacknowledged male norm against which women are judged and found different and lesser, for which women's only recourse is to erase themselves, to be just like this 'same'. Only through contiguous organizing can we finally subvert the hierarchical relationship of sameness and difference that always and inevitably consigns women to the position of the erased, as the same; or as the different or the other, the position of the lesser than the same. That means much flatter organizations, but it also means flatter organizations that are not only a collection of colleagues at the top, egalitarian only for a lucky few, with the peasants still camped outside the castle wall, necessary but irrelevant in terms of power. Instead, the goal of contiguous organizing means that all the decisions made about what to do and how to do it are made together: everyone decides. If we can do it in a country, as complicated as that is, we can do it in an organization: no one would dream of turning Canada into a kingdom [or a queendom]. We need to dream of organizations that are equally committed to democratic, participatory, contiguous organizing, where everyone, through teaching, learning and sharing all the skills of organizing, can figure out how to get work done with others. If not, we will continue to blame women for not being [the same as] men, for not being able to do well in a system set up for them to fail; we will continue to ask the wrong questions, and get the wrong answers.

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