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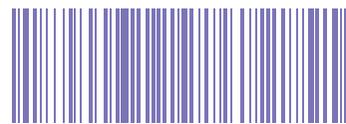
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Gendered Rationality? A Genealogical Exploration of the Philosophical and Sociological Conceptions of Rationality, Masculinity and Organization

Anne Ross-Smith* and Martin Kornberger

Although feminist organizational theory frequently refers to the association between rationality and masculinity, this association tends to be stated rather than argued for. This article examines, from a philosophical and sociological perspective, how these two concepts have become genealogically so closely and inseparably intertwined. It proposes that it is the early philosophical and sociological interpretations of reason and rationality that linked masculinity and rationality. To explore the connection between rationality and masculinity that is so fundamental to management and, more broadly, organizational discourse, is the purpose of this article. Commencing with a brief overview of pre-Cartesian concepts of rationality, the main focus of the article is on modern conceptions of rationality, starting with the philosophy of Descartes. It examines the influence of the ideas of Francis Bacon, Enlightenment interpretations of rationality and the influence of Weberian rationality and subsequent interpretations of this concept of rationality by early organizational theorists. Finally, it demonstrates, via a case study of strategic management, how contemporary organizational discourse continues to reflect many of the assumptions about masculinity and rationality that are deeply embedded in more traditional organizational discourse. The article concludes with a number of suggestions for a way forward for critical gender studies that moves beyond the standard feminist critique of organizational discourse and practice.

Keywords: rationality, masculinity, management, organizational discourse

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Introduction

Feminist organizational theory has drawn attention to the association between rationality and masculinity (Ferguson, 1984; Kanter, 1977; Morgan, 1997).¹ It is an association that, in relation to the discourse of management and organization theory, including the way in which the historical relationship of these constructs developed within the broader discourse of modernity, is not comprehensively documented in the organization studies literature. Starting from the presupposition that philosophical and sociological interpretations of reason and rationality shape deeply embedded interpretations of rationality within contemporary management and organization theory discourses, this article analyses the origins of this connection and its effects.

Although the issue of gender in organization studies, as it is manifested in managerial practice and organizational discourse, is explored extensively (see for example, Calás and Smircich, 1996; Ferguson, 1984; Hearn and Parkin, 1987; Kanter, 1977; Meyerson and Kolb, 2001; Savage and Witz, 1992; Thomas and Davies, 2002), in main/malestream organization studies, 'research on gender has been constantly ignored and, at best, marginalized in separate chapters, special issues, separate tracks or divisions at conferences, footnotes or parenthetical observations' (Martin, 2000, p. 208). Separating feminist theory from other areas and treating it as a specialized field in itself means to ignore the link between organizational discourse, management practices and gendered realities.

Criticizing this marginalization, several authors have pointed out that gender works at the heart of organizational discourse and powerfully shapes ostensibly gender-neutral practices. For instance, Calás and Smircich (1991) have shown that the discourse of leadership is in itself gendered (see also more recently Cunha and Cunha, 2002).

Martin (2000) demonstrated that gender is at work in a series of apparently gender-neutral topics such as the Hawthorne studies, Weberian bureaucracy, bounded rationality and bounded emotionality and institutional theory. Ignoring the gendered basis of these agendas, organization scholars re-produce their implicit basic gendered assumptions. On a linguistic level, Leonard (2002) highlights the fact that it is not the seemingly neutral and objective language of science that drives the development of organization theory but metaphors that implicitly engender research as they are employed (see also Ferguson, 1994). As Gherardi *et al.* (2003) argue, it is not only metaphors but also the very structure of the organizational discourse in itself that is gendered. They state that debating organization within a dominant, pre-given structure limits and pre-forms a discourse from the beginning. Resisting such an 'order of discourse' (Foucault, 1972) becomes thus an important feminist agenda.

In sum, then, what these authors argue is that gender cannot be understood as a separate stream within the field of organization studies, nor can

it be adequately addressed through simply adding a chapter about gender at the end of the latest edition of a textbook (Martin, 2000) — rather, gender is enacted in organizational discourse and deeply embedded in managerial practices.

This article elaborates on this perspective. Unlike the authors whose work is cited above, however, it does not analyse the gendered assumptions behind single practices or discourses: rather, it identifies and explores the relation between masculinity and the rationality that frames these discourses and practices. Put simply, it argues that there is a missing link between research such as that noted above and its relation to the basic concept of rationality that powerfully shapes and simultaneously genders the researched concepts. The article will show that the concept of rationality that is elaborated in western society from Descartes to Kant and Weber and enacted in organizational discourse and which informs practices is, at its core, masculine, despite appearing gender-neutral. Thus, rationality keeps on gendering organizational discourses and practices.

Through a genealogical analysis of the philosophical and sociological assumptions that frame and underlie organizational discourse it will demonstrate that rationality is not a gender-neutral concept.² Rather the concept of rationality is gendered in its core assumptions. Western rationality is masculine rationality (Nagl-Docekal, 1999) and, through the rationalization of organizations, this hidden masculinity becomes embedded throughout organizations, powerfully shaping them. With Foucault (1977, 1980) the article argues that power is not something that is simply added to rationality: rather it is embedded in (organizational) structures, enacted in (scientific) discourses and exercised in (managerial) practices. It is, in itself, power. It will show this relation by examining the work of Weber (1930, 1948) and early writers on organizations such as Taylor (1967) and Parsons (1964). Using the discourse of strategy as an exemplar, the article will demonstrate that the dominant masculine rationality still informs and thus genders organizational realities.

The overall purpose of the article is to demonstrate, firstly, that rationality from an historical perspective was from its philosophical beginnings linked to masculinity and secondly, that this masculine rationality still shapes organizational discourse and managerial practices.

Although the principal concern is with modern conceptions of rationality, starting with the philosophy of Descartes, the article commences with a brief note about pre-Cartesian interpretations of the concept of rationality. It then examines the Cartesian concept of rationality and the influence of Francis Bacon; the Enlightenment philosophy of rationality, in particular, the ideas of Kant, and Weberian conceptions of rationality. Drawing on this theoretical exploration, the second part of the article analyses the contemporary discourse of management and organization theory. Using the discourse of strategy as an exemplar, the purpose of this analysis is to articulate the

enduring and resilient nature of the masculinity/rationality connection and, more generally, the representation of gender in this discourse.

The philosophical roots of masculine rationality

To be rational, according to the Oxford dictionary (Fowler and Fowler, 1978, p. 740) is to 'be endowed with reason'. It is Descartes who is commonly associated with the foundations of modern philosophy and, in particular, modern conceptions of rationality or what it is to be endowed with reason (Lloyd, 1984; Scruton, 1984). Yet, as Scruton (1984, p. 15) suggests, it was 'Plato who proposed that through the cultivation of reason man can come to know himself, God and the world . . .', and it was reason, not ordinary sense perception, that enabled the discovery of ultimate truth. Plato is also attributed with refining the idea of the world in terms of the form of the mind/matter dichotomy (Irigaray, 1995). But reason or truly rational thought is, according to the ancients, taken to express the real nature of the mind — a nature in which there is no sex (Lloyd, 1984) — which raises the question — if this is the explicit nature of reason, how, then, did the association of masculinity with rationality and reason come to pass?

Lloyd (1984) has proposed that from the beginnings of philosophical thought, maleness was symbolically associated with reason and femaleness was associated with what reason left behind. As Lloyd (1984, p. 104) states, 'Rationality has been conceived of as transcendence of the feminine itself: and the 'feminine' itself has been partly constituted by its occurrence within this structure'. In her account of the philosophical treatment of reason, Lloyd (1984) argues that it was the Greek philosophers who initially associated women and femininity with nature. Men came to be associated with reason and the mind — the opposite of nature and form, hence beginning the association of rationality (that is, the acquisition of reason) with masculinity. Thus, according to Nagl-Docekal (1999, p. 49), 'the concept of reason, in its everyday sense, has connotations of masculinity.' Abstract thought, objective judgement or general principles are seen as masculine characteristics, whereas subjectivity, emotions and orientation towards the concrete are understood as female (Nagl-Docekal, 1999; Seidler, 1994; Winter and Robert, 1980). This separation is not equal but organized in a hierarchical relation of subordination.

Cartesian rationality and Bacon's empiricism

Scruton (1984) suggests that the ideas of the ancients — in particular Plato and Aristotle — remained the predominant influence on medieval philosophy and religion, and it was not until the time of Descartes that there was a substantive shift in the philosophical interpretation of the nature of reason.

Lloyd (1984) further proposes that, while pre-Cartesian philosophy was concerned with reason as the distinguishing feature of human nature, Descartes was most frequently associated with the idea of reason as an achievement. Descartes is attributed with articulating the idea that it is through the human intellect that human beings can reach an understanding of the world and further, with the idea that each individual is capable of making reasoned judgements (Collinson, 1987). The Cartesian model of knowledge, or Cartesian rationalism, is one that is 'based on clarity, dispassion and detachment' and on the dualism associated with the separation of mind and body (Bordo, 1986, p. 440). The mind is the active, sense-making and dominating source of human power over the mere extensive bodies in a world 'out there', such that, '[a]fter examination we shall find that there is nothing remaining in the idea of body excepting that it is extended in length, breadth and depth' (Descartes, 1942, p. 259). While the body is mere *res extensa*, thinking happens in the *res cogitans*, in the mind strictly divided from the body.

As Gatens (1991) suggests, this dichotomous distinction contains an implicit assumption that assigns dominance to one category at the expense of the other. In this way, reason or rationality in Cartesian philosophy becomes that category that is dominant and assigned to the masculine, and non-reason is subordinate and assigned to the feminine.

While Descartes was arguably responsible for the philosophical birth of the rational man 'who knows his own awareness to be certain and entirely distinct from the external world of material substance, which is epistemologically less certain and perceptible only as object' (Tarnas, 1991, p. 277), it was Francis Bacon to whom the foundation of the empiricist tradition is attributed. According to Harvey (1989, p. 14), Bacon saw 'a house of wise sages who would be the guardians of knowledge, the ethical judges, and the true scientists' and who, 'while living outside the community . . . would exercise extraordinary moral power over it'. Bacon founded a vision of an elite but collective male wisdom that just happened to be European. Bacon is ascribed with removing the pursuit of knowledge from abstract definitions and deductive reasoning and focusing it on the idea of unbiased analysis of concrete data, inductive reasoning and empirically supported conclusions, thus founding the stream of philosophy that became known as empiricism. In Bacon's philosophy, nature maintains its femaleness but becomes knowable and controllable (Lloyd, 1984).

Although viewing knowledge and its acquisition from seemingly opposite positions, Descartes and Bacon, nevertheless, shared the 'vision of the human race becoming, through the advance of science, masters and possessors of Nature' (Lloyd, 1984, p. 57). It was they who set the foundations for what was to become modernist thinking (Harvey, 1989). In short, the empiricist tradition founded by Bacon and the rationalist tradition founded by Descartes, can be said to mark the beginnings of the scientific revolution that was, arguably, to dominate philosophy until the latter half of the 20th

century. Their philosophies were likewise formative in the development of 18th century Enlightenment interpretations of rationality.

The influence of the Enlightenment on the masculinization of rationality

Enlightenment thinking is said to embody extraordinary attempts 'to develop objective science, universal morality and law, and autonomous art according to their inner logic' (Harvey, 1989, p. 12). It is possible to trace the thread of influence of Enlightenment conceptions of rationality through to their present articulations in management and organizational discourse (Alvesson and Deetz, 1996; Porter, 1990). For instance, ideas associated with an autonomous subject progressively driven by knowledge acquired through scientific methods; the rise of reason over authority and traditional values, and the human drive towards economic growth and human progress remain embedded even today in management thinking. In particular, the ideas of Immanuel Kant and his successors among German idealists can be seen to be especially influential on the further development of rationality. This is because it is Kant's elaboration of Enlightenment rationality, in particular, that provided Max Weber, whose influence on modern organizational discourse is arguably without peer, with the set of assumptions that shaped his interpretation of rationality. According to Albrow (1987, p. 168) Kant asserted:

Everything in nature works according to laws. Only a rational being has the capacity of acting according to the conception of laws, i.e. according to principles. This capacity is will. Since reason is required for the derivation of action from laws, will is nothing else other than practical reason.

The Kantian idea of reason is a faculty by which man distinguishes himself from all other things, even from himself. Kant's philosophy proposes that what makes any feature of society peculiarly human is the fact that it is based on rationality and freedom, rather than on the necessity of feelings and inclinations. In Kant's philosophy reason becomes concerned with the acquisition of knowledge, whereby subjective experiences are transformed into object knowledge (Collinson, 1987; McMillan, 1982; Scruton, 1984).

This, too, is a conception of reason that limits essential human characteristics to male characteristics (Seidler, 1994). From a Kantian perspective, what makes any activity specifically human is that there is no parallel for it in the animal world. Gould (1976) contends that much activity that can be described as distinctly human (or rational), in the Kantian sense, has been reserved for men — whereas in this perspective women are more or less confined to those activities more frequently associated with biological life — such as food, sex and procreation, which are the same for human animals as for other forms of animals (McMillan, 1982).

Rationality, again in the Kantian sense, is found in both practical action and in symbolic systems. Reason belongs to the world of thought and action becomes rational because it is governed by that world. Within Kant's interpretation of reason there is, as well, the quest for universality, comprehensive laws, inclusive theories and exhaustive categorizations that are associated with pure reason.

These ideas underlie Weberian interpretations of rationality (Albrow, 1987). They were not worked out from first principles, but derived from philosophical ideas handed down over generations (Albrow, 1987). As Albrow (1987, p. 171) puts it, 'Weber was drawing on a cultural resource, not inventing a new theory. He never claimed to be a philosopher, but he was drawing on the product of philosophy'. He was also drawing on a rationality that in terms of its philosophical origins structurally excluded women — which of course, was the norm for his day and class.

Rationality and masculinity in early organizational discourse

Weberian rationality

Although the embodiment of reason in social institutions and practices was a central theme of the work of Weber's philosophical predecessors (Brubaker, 1984), it was Weber who embedded these ideas into sociology and social theory. His ideas were developed around the concept of *Verband*, or organization, which subsumes differing, but more concrete, entities such as 'the state, the political party, the Church or sect, and the firm' (Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980, p. 76). That is not to say that philosophy has not continued to influence the discourse of management and organization theory. It has. For instance, both postmodern and feminist philosophical ideas have carved out an increasing presence in this discourse. But it is the ideas of early sociologists, such as Durkheim, Saint Simon, Comte, Spencer and Marx, but especially Weber, that provided the most direct influence on the earlier formation of contemporary organizational discourse (Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980).

The nature of the relationship between Weberian rationality and masculinity is complex (Morgan, 1996). Weber's conception of rationality has a multiplicity of meanings. Indeed, Brubaker (1984, p. 2) cites 16 apparently distinguishable meanings of rationality in Weber's writings. Of particular relevance to the arguments in this article is Weber's elucidation of the difference between formal or instrumental rationality, which is concerned with means such as formal rules and substantive rationality — that which is associated with ends such as human values and ethics (Bologh, 1990; Clegg, 1994). According to Winter and Robert (1980, p. 271), it is exactly this instrumental rationality that 'functions as a mystifying force by reducing important questions to problems of instrumental control; it is the quintessentially

modern masculine style'. Rationalizing organizations in this instrumental way implicitly leads to a masculinization of organizations, since instrumental rationality and masculinity are inextricably intertwined (Winter and Robert, 1980).

On a broader level, Hindess (1987, p. 145) has noted that the modern period is dominated by the 'world view of formal rationality' or instrumentalism. It is likewise the ideals of formal rationality that have dominated organization theory (Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980). For Weber the increasing bureaucratization of the modern world and the triumph of instrumental rationality were inevitable. Weber's explanation for this is complicated and, while not the main concern of this account, needs brief elaboration because of its subsequent interpretation by organizational theorists.

To start with, Weber saw conflict between formal and substantive rationality as inevitable, since both are desirable. The implementation of formal bureaucratic rules and technical rationalization (associated with instrumental rationality) allows the individual freedom to pursue the more high-minded ideals of substantive rationality, which, in turn, represents the basis for human freedom. However, it is those particular ends or absolute values associated with the achievement of substantive rationality that, according to Weber, inevitably decline as modernization occurs. This is because they are no longer necessary in a world where material self-interest and formal rules prevail. The result is a paradoxical situation in which the rise of bureaucratic rules and organization, wealth and power, become ends in themselves. The result is one in which ultimate values that are substantially rational, retreat from public life and instrumental rationality prevails (Bologh, 1990; Clegg, 1994; Habermas, 1984).

Bologh (1990, p. 126) explains the effects in terms of the masculinity/rationality thesis in the following way:

Value-rational action tends to degenerate into instrumentally rational action which corresponds with the cult of masculinity, a male chauvinism that values physical strength and bravado as an end in itself. This traditional version of masculinity becomes supplemented in the modern capitalist world with the instrumental use of monetary calculations for determining the most effective, most efficient means for realising one's material self interest. Instrumental, purposeful, calculating rationality, determining the least costly, most beneficial means for achieving ends, implies reliance on precise measurements, comparison and quantitative calculation of costs and benefits with a jettisoning of all non-quantifiable considerations . . . Instrumental, calculating rationality brings with it qualities considered masculine: smart and decisive self determination or free, confident aggressive action.

Bologh's (1990) comments apply not only to Weber's original ideas, but also to the subsequent interpretation of these ideas by organizational theorists.

Albrow (1987) suggests that Weber's ideal type of bureaucracy was interpreted, rightly or wrongly, as a theory of organizational efficiency. Thus, the concepts of rationality and rational action that came to be associated with organizational attributes, particularly efficiency and effectiveness, implicitly contained masculinist assumptions (Morgan, 1996). This was due in part to the entrenched nature of these assumptions in western philosophy upon which Weber drew for his ideas. As Morgan (1996) argues, the concept of the ideal type is meant to be impersonal and neutral, describing a utopian, abstracted state. Because questions of gender (also race or age) would disturb these ideal types, they are ignored, which means, practically, that gendered practices implicitly structure organizational life to the extent that they are present but not noticed.

From the perspective of Bologh's (1990) comments, a logical slide occurred as Weber's ideas began to exert an extensive influence on organizational theorizing. The inherent association of masculinity and rationality starts to become associated with effectiveness and efficiency, and they, in turn, start to become masculine attributes. So the modern bureaucratic organization, deemed by organization theorists to have technical superiority over any other form of organization (Weber, 1948), becomes characteristically masculine. As Hearn (1992, p. 160) states, 'the connections between bureaucracies and masculinities are *socially and historically intense*. The modernization of bureaucratic rules and procedures certainly reinforced the power of men in most instances'.³

It is unrealistic to argue that Weber's ideas were the sole influence on early management and organization theory but, as has already been demonstrated, Weber's ideas, although principally sociological, were resonant with, and foundational to, the systematic study of organizations as a serious intellectual pursuit, rather than as an offspring purely of commercial applications or consulting ideas (Morgan, 1996). The extent of his influence via subsequent interpretations of his ideas by others should not be underestimated. For instance, Talcott Parsons, another sociologist influential in the development of the discourse of management and organization, was responsible for the translation into English of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Weber, 1930). Parsons suggested that Weber was the founder of structural-functionalism (Robertson and Turner, 1991), a strange claim for the father of interpretive sociology, which was subsequently to become the dominant paradigm in management and organization theory. Furthermore, Burrell (1996, p. 643) has made the claim, in relation to organizational analysis, that until recently the 'figure of Max Weber bestrode the terrain (of organizational analysis) like a colossus and it was within his shadow that almost all the work was carried out'.

Weber's notion of rationality can be read as a commentary on the construction of a particular kind of masculinity based on the exclusion of the personal, the sexual and the feminine from any definition of rationality. The

apparent neutrality of Weber's organizational 'rules and goals disguises the gender (that is, male) interests served by them' (Pringle, 1989, p. 161). Thus, for instance, as Burrell and Hearn (1989) suggest, Weber's theory of bureaucracy, whilst apparently gender neutral, can implicitly be seen as a theory about male bureaucrats. It is also possible to apply to the discourse of management and organization theory certain tendencies that apply to western thinking more generally. Moreover, the implicit masculinity of Weberian rationality, like that of his philosophical predecessors, passed unnoticed into mainstream organization theory. Secondly, the proponents of the early theories and philosophies that inform the discourse of management and organization were all men, with the significant exception of Mary Parker Follett. Thirdly, the language that dominated the formation of this discourse, like the language of philosophy, was couched in specifically masculine terms.

Scientific management

Another major, formative influence on organization theory, that of Fredrick Taylor's scientific management, was developing a presence at the same time as Weber's ideas but was not directly influenced by Weber *per se*. Weber, however, said of scientific management, that it 'enjoys the greatest triumphs in the rational conditioning and training of work performance' (Weber, 1948, p. 261 cited in Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980, p. 81). In Weber's terms, scientific management was the embodiment of instrumental rationality. Taylor's prescriptions attempted to turn management into a science which was 'gendered in multiple ways' (Hollway, 1996, p. 34). His aim was 'the development of each man to his state of maximum efficiency' (Taylor, 1967, p. 9). The way he did this was to use the methods of empiricism and apply them to the management of industry, thus further entrenching management with the inherent masculinity that is associated with empiricism from its earliest articulation in philosophy and the social sciences (Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980; Harvey, 1989).

Taylor's contribution to the development of the ideal of the rational (male) manager is derived from the distinction he makes between manager and worker. According to Taylor, the manager was responsible for the planning function and managing; thus, management required a personality type that would lend itself to this task (Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980). Taylor commented that women workers ('girls', as he refers to them) (Taylor, 1967, p. 96) were prone to idleness during work hours and thus need careful control. He suggests, by implication, that they would lack the requisite skills to be managers who seem more akin to what Taylor (1967, p. 19) describes as 'men of unusual energy, vitality, and ambition, who set up their own standards, and who work hard, even though it may be against their best interest'.

Hearn and Parkin argue that the intellectual tradition shared by:

industrial psychology, organisational psychology, organisation theory, management theory, industrial relations as well as the range of related sub-disciplines such as work study, personnel management, operational research, all of which describe, analyse and theorise about organisations and organisational life. (1987, p. 17)

is that of scientific management theory, or Taylorism. Taylor's prescriptions, they assert, were 'a detailed set of suggestions for how men should be both as organisers and the organised' (Taylor, 1967, p. 18). This is particularly evident in the language Taylor used in his prescriptions for effective management.

Taylor's work has been heavily criticized for its conception of the worker as simply an item of machinery (Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980). Despite these criticisms, the influence of Scientific Management on the subsequent development of management and organization theory is well recognized (Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980; Dunford, 1992; Hearn and Parkin, 1987) and still apparent in many 'workplace practices we now take for granted, such as the planned flow of work, stock control, work flow study, ergonomics, cost accounting and personnel functions such as staff selection and the development of job descriptions' (Dunford, 1992, p. 56).

The human relations movement

The ideas of the human relations theorists are, like scientific management, embedded with notions of the rational organization and embrace the principles of scientific method. They, too, are primarily concerned with maximizing efficiency and effectiveness.

This is exemplified in the Hawthorne experiments, which are the best known and arguably the most influential representation of human relations theories (Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980). Their original purpose was to examine ways of improving worker productivity. Acker and Van Houten (1992) have undertaken a comprehensive reappraisal of the Hawthorne experiments. They demonstrate the differential treatment of men and women during the experiments and further reveal that gender differences were not a consideration in a situation where they should have been. The point to be made here about the human relations movement is not so much that it resulted in the recognition of informal organization but that it produced a 'highly developed ideological apparatus of normative control, of hegemony, for the management of organisations' (Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980, p. 135).

Hearn and Parkin (1987, p. 25) propose that the major impact of human relations theory has 'been in terms of facilitating change in management method and styles'. Human relations theory opened a new set of personal factors as being of interest to management, 'the worker was becoming known to management with the possibility of being patronised and manipulated'

(Hearn and Parkin, 1987, p. 25). Hence the manager becomes more and more cast in the role of patriarch and the organization becomes associated with an image that is familial, rather than mechanistic (Hollway, 1996).

It is at this point in the development of organization theory that, arguably, the rationality that was associated in philosophical thinking, and in Weber's work, with the acquisition of knowledge and an understanding that goes beyond sense experience, assumes a different meaning and starts to diverge from its philosophical origins. At the same time the association with masculinity does not diminish. If anything, it becomes further entrenched. The rational organization, as expressed in theory, continues to be perceived as one that is, above all, efficient.

The influence of structuralism/functionalism

The recognition by organizational theorists that organizations are gendered is relatively recent (see Alvesson and Due Billing, 1992; Calás and Smircich, 1992). The recency of such recognition can, arguably, be attributed to the dominance of the structural/functionalist paradigm in the field of organization theory and analysis and, in particular, its apparent gender-neutrality.

The dominant place of structural/functionalism in the development of the discourse of organization theory is a function, to some extent, of the influence of American sociology on this discourse until the mid 1970s, including the ideas of Talcott Parsons (Hamilton, 1984; Robertson and Turner, 1991). Parsons is attributed with developing the theory of structural/functionalism and with being a founder of systems theory (Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980; Hassard, 1993). The impact of his ideas, although primarily focused on broader social systems rather than organizations *per se*, can be judged by their legacy.

Burrell and Morgan (1979, p. xi) have suggested that the vast proportion of theory and research in the field of organization studies 'is located within the bounds of one of four paradigms', that of functionalism. They further suggest that this particular paradigm, whilst apparently producing 'a dazzling array of different kinds of theory and research' typologies and approaches is, in fact, 'very narrowly founded' (1979, p. 120). Included in this theoretical domain is social systems theory and objectivism; classical management theory and industrial psychology; job satisfaction and human relations theory; socio-technical systems theory; equilibrium theories of organization; structural functionalism; open systems theory; contingency theory; theories of bureaucratic dysfunction; social action theory; and pluralist theory (Burrell and Morgan, 1979).

The functionalist paradigm has 'provided the foundation for most modern theory and research on the subject of organization' (Morgan, 1997, p. 15). Hassard (1993) argues that one of the two main theoretical influences within this domain, systems theory, has continued to be used as the basis for texts

on organization, in management consultancy and in best-selling books on management to the extent that it has become 'the generic paradigm for contemporary organisational analysis' (Hassard, 1993, p. 48; see also Donaldson, 1996).

The principal focus in theories derived from structural/functionalism and its successor, systems theory, emphasise order and the compliance of organization members in acting according to pre-scripted roles. It is also replete with seemingly neutral, scientific vocabulary, purged of value, but, in fact, it is value laden (Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980). Overall, systems theory seeks to provide essentially rational explanations for social affairs (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Systems theory represents an attempt to posit a theory for the whole of society; yet, in its attempts to provide a way of integrating different social sectors and levels, it reveals a distinctive bias against women. This is most obvious in the Parsonian distinction between instrumentalism/work and affectivity/family.

Parsons described the subordination of women in the typical western family of the 1950s and suggested that such subordination was functionally important in maintaining the social structure (Hamilton, 1984). Parsons (1964, p. 94) states: 'The woman's fundamental status is that of her husband's wife, the mother of his children, and traditionally the person responsible for a complex of activities with the management of the household, care of children etc.'. The dichotomous thinking which sees one side of the dichotomy as having dominance over the other is reinforced. The organization, in Parsonian terms, is part of the public domain and is replete with an instrumentalism that is representative of a masculine ethic.

Rationality and masculinity in contemporary organizational discourse

So far this article has been concerned to demonstrate both the longevity and durability of the masculinity/rationality connection in early management and organizational discourse. Early theories of organization were created without reference to gender. It has been seen so far that the most influential of these theories set the agenda for the entrenchment of an intrinsic masculinity associated with the notion of rationality. As Morgan (1986, p. 179) points out, 'the links between the male stereotype and the values that dominate many ideas about the nature of organization are striking. . . . Organizations are often encouraged to be rational, analytical, strategic, decision oriented, tough and aggressive, and so are men'. This connection between masculinity and purposive rationality embodied in organization remains strong and dominant (Winter and Robert, 1980, p. 261).

Increasingly, however, the unproblematic treatment of gender representation in the discourse of management and organization theory has been

addressed by the emergence of a substantive and scholarly body of contemporary organizational literature drawing attention to the gendered nature of organizational theory and practice (Collinson and Hearn, 1996). Reappraisals of early organization theory and analysis, from a gender-based perspective (Acker and Van Houten, 1992; Hearn, 1992; Hearn and Parkin, 1987; Hollway, 1996; Mills and Tancred, 1992), draw attention to the implicit assumptions underlying the notion of the rational organization. The problematization of gender cannot, however, be taken to mean that this misrepresentation or under-representation has been wholly overcome in contemporary management and organizational theory. Using the discourse of strategic management as an exemplar, the following section of article analyses the interconnections between contemporary versions of rationality and masculinity that are still enacted in management and organizational theory.

The discourse of strategic management

In recent decades, strategic management has become one of the most important tasks for corporations: strategy 'is what makes a firm unique, a winner, or a survivor' (Henderson, 1989; Thomas, 1993, p. 3). Barry and Elmes note, not without irony, the contemporary importance of strategy, suggesting that 'strategy must rank as one of the most prominent, influential, and costly stories told in organizations' (Barry and Elmes, 1997, p. 430). Strategic management is also understood as the successor to the bureaucratic systems that preceded it (Kerfoot and Knights, 1993, p. 670). Analysing this discourse as an exemplar will show how far masculine rationality remains the hallmark of organizational discourse.

Historically, Chandler's thesis 'Unless structure follows strategy, inefficiency rules' (Chandler 1962, p. 314) — became the start of a rapidly increasing, now immense, interest in strategy and strategic management. Genealogically, the idea of strategy was linked from the outset to an obsession with rational planning (Mintzberg, 1994) in a dubious relation between management and war. As Corsun and Costen (2001) have pointed out, the connection between military and (strategic) management is obvious and omnipresent. Through this connection the masculine character of management becomes visible (Shaw, 1990). This is especially obvious when one looks at the historical roots of strategic management.

As Clausewitz suggested in his influential book, *On War*, strategy:

forms the plan of the war, and to this end it links together the series of acts which are to lead to the final decision, that is to say, it makes the plans for the separate campaigns and regulates the combats to be fought in each. (1968, p. 165)

Strategy is decoupled from responsibility for the goal it seeks to achieve. The strategists do not care about the ethical implications of their strategizing: the

ends are accepted as given and the task is to provide the means to achieve this end. In military terms, the commander's responsibility 'is that of applying most profitably to the interest of the higher war policy the force allotted to him within the theatre of operations assigned to him' (Hart, 1967, p. 319), and in this theatre strategy is defined as 'the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfil the ends of policy' (Hart, 1967, p. 321). Strategy co-ordinates and directs the available resources in order to reach a pre-given end. 'Strategy depends for success, first and foremost, on a sound *calculation and co-ordination of the end and the means*. . . . A true adjustment would establish a perfect *economy of forces*. . . .' (Hart 1967, p. 323, added emphasis). Strategic management became the field of knowledge and practice that should enable and limit the western dream, commenced philosophically by Descartes and Bacon, developed sociologically by Weber and applied practically by Taylor and his successors, to achieve the perfect 'economy of forces' that was meant to gain control over the environment and direct organizational action. Without changing its underlying presumptions and core assumptions, this martial concept of strategy was translated into management theory and has become a driving force of management thinking in the last 30 years. These developments have been described in detail by a number of authors.

In their seminal article, Knights and Morgan (1991) use Foucault's idea of discursive practices to show the construction of person and worlds within the discourse of corporate strategy. They point to a number of power effects of corporate strategy discourse, including the expression of a gendered masculinity for (masculine) management and the facilitation and legitimization of the exercise of power (Knights and Morgan, 1991; Rasmussen, 2001). Both:

strategy and masculine identity are informed by an instrumental purposive model of action that denies its historical self formation equally as much as it dismisses elements of experience which cannot 'readily be assimilated into rational categories'. (Seidler, 1989, p. 7)

Ultimately, Knights and Morgan (1991, p. 264) demonstrate that 'strategic discourse and practice both reflects and reproduces what may be termed a "masculinist conception of power"'.

According to Kerfoot and Knights (1993, p. 670), far from being its replacement, strategic management is the successor to the bureaucratic systems that preceded it, and thus it is dominated by masculine rationality: 'Within strategic management, work becomes defined as a rational and depersonalised enterprise where there is minimal space for interpersonal contact beyond the 'purposive intimacy' geared towards realising corporate objectives'. This intimacy, they argue, 'becomes reconstituted and transformed into purposive rational action' (Kerfoot and Knights, 1993, p. 670) which, in turn, leads to a variety of masculinity they describe as competitive masculinity. This is described as a way of relating to the world wherein everything becomes an

object of and for control. In this sense, competitive masculinity can be seen to be a ceaseless struggle for material and symbolic success that drives strategic management.

Onyx *et al.* (1996) examined the current developments in strategic human resource theory. They note that Wright *et al.* (cited in Onyx *et al.*, 1996), drawing on the resource-based theory of the firm, discuss how to develop human resources as a source of competitive advantage, through Human Resource Management systems 'that develop the capital pool of employees and elicit appropriate behaviour from employees'. As they go on to suggest, this approach emphasises the underlying assumptions of rationality, instrumental utility and control, all of which represent a continuing legacy of Weber's notion of formal or instrumental rationality.

With this analysis the link between the martial, masculine beginnings and organizational adaptation of the concept of strategy becomes obvious. The link between rationality and masculinity, however, becomes even more apparent in less critical and more practically orientated approaches to strategic management. This is especially evident in a contribution of the doyen of strategic management, Henry Mintzberg (1998, p. 93), who describes strategic positioning as:

consisting of a *launching* device, representing an organization, that send *projectiles*, namely products and services, at a landscape of *targets*, meaning markets, faced with *rivals*, or competition, in the hope of attaining *fit* (added emphasis).

Obviously phallogentric, Mintzberg's thinking is inspired by metaphors of war, in which the organization is merely a vehicle of the managerial war-machinery. In this concept, instrumental rationality and masculinity are inextricably intertwined and implicitly form the basis for the continuing gendering of organizational discourse. Moreover, this discourse touches:

the very sense of what it is to be human as well as having effects that readily legitimize prevailing relations of inequality and privilege in contemporary organizations and institutions. (Knights and Morgan, 1991, p. 251)

In other words, the discourse of strategic management implicitly genders organizational realities. Within this discourse, organizational members 'are transformed into subjects who secure their sense of meaning, identity and reality . . . through participating in the discourse and practices of strategy' (Knights and Morgan, 1991, p. 269). The identity of these subjects and the organizational reality they enact, drawing on the discourse of strategy, is masculine.

Taking the masculine language, inspired by its war-like metaphors it is obvious, at a fundamental level, how the discourse of management and organization theory, even as it currently exists, is conceptually shaped by the

notion of masculine rationality that is deeply embedded in western thinking and it is this dominant masculine rationality that gendered and genders the organizational discourse that is powerfully enacted in managerial practice.

Conclusion

The philosophical and theoretical standpoint taken in this article is one which has positioned the discourse of management and organization theory as a masculinist discourse, imbued with conceptions of rationality and instrumental control, which are taken for granted and which render gender largely unproblematic within this discourse. The embeddedness of the relationship between the concepts rationality and masculinity were seen to extend, historically, back to classical Greek philosophy and, subsequently, to influence deeply the discourse of modernity and the ideals of Enlightenment thinking. The link between these two concepts was also found to be resilient, durable and capable of reinventing itself such that it still dominates organizational discourse.

In the recent decades, however, the landscape of management and organizational theory has (apparently) changed. Organizational theorists have drawn attention to newer, decentralized and more flexible organizational forms (Clegg, 1990; Ray and Reed, 1994); scholars speak of a 'feminization' of management and organization theory (Fonda, 1997) and identify a 'female advantage' (Fletcher, 1994; Helgesen, 1990; critically Cunha and Cunha, 2002; Due Billing and Alvesson, 2000). Arguably, bureaucracy and masculine management are no longer the norm. This, then, raises the question — can masculine rationality still be regarded as the defining characteristic of organizational discourse? This is an important concern, especially since, as Putnam and Mumby (1993, p. 55) argue, rationality cannot be considered to be an objective immutable state. Rather, as they see it, rationality is 'socially constructed and cast as the dominant mode of organizing' in contemporary organizations. Using the discourse of strategic management in contemporary organization theory as an exemplar, this article has sought to establish that a masculine version of rationality can still be seen to dominate the field.

Hence, the analysis conducted in this article raises several important issues for further reflection and research. To start with, if organizational discourse is embedded in masculine rationality, should rationality be dismissed? Or should it be exchanged for a 'feminine' version of rationality? For that matter, is the feminization of management and organization theory even a desirable alternative? One important insight that can be drawn from this article is that rationality is not, *per se*, masculine, but rather that the masculinization of rationality that has occurred throughout history needs to be unmasked and critiqued (Nagl-Docekal, 1999).

This, however, is unlikely to happen through a 'feminization' of organizational discourse. Winter and Roberts (1980) state that instrumental rationality is not necessarily cold-blooded, technical rationality: rather, it can include emotional and interpersonal skills. Empirically, Kerfoot and Knights (1993) found that team-building and similar human resource management programmes seem to be an attempt:

to elicit commitment to corporate objectives of profitability under the rubric of success and efficiency by means of 'synthetic sociability'. In these instances management, in effect, seeks to manipulate intimacy within social relations and channel it in the direction of achieving corporate goals. Intimacy thus becomes reconstituted into purposive-rational action. (Kerfoot and Knights, 1993, p. 670)

Put simply, the emphasis on soft, seemingly more feminine skills (such as intuition, creativity, relationship orientations and so on) widens and completes the dominance of instrumental rationality. As Rutherford (2001, p. 326) argues in a study of the differences between masculine and feminine management styles:

the much vaunted feminization of management does not mean that more women are to be found in senior positions in organizations. Nor do large numbers of women managers necessarily lead to a more feminized management style. Stereotypes of women still act against their acceptance into positions of power while men's ability to adopt some of traditionally feminine skills of communication means that women's supposed advantage may have been leapfrogged.

In support of this Cunha and Cunha (2002, p. 5) argue that dominant management texts spread 'a masculine [ethos] using a feminine logos (discourse).' Using the buzzwords 'excellence' and 're-engineering' as exemplars, they identify:

the latent and subtle masculine subtext referred to in the organizational literature . . . and this subtext may even be (re)produced by those who publicly criticise sexism and the strength of the masculine stereotype, thus making it even more hidden and insidious:

The feminine ethos featured in these writings serves for no other purpose than as a 'tool for assuring the perpetuation of a masculine ethos throughout both organizational theory and managerial practice'. (2002, p. 10)

As an alternative to the 'feminization' of organizational discourse this article suggests, in support of a proposition put by Due Billing and Alvesson (2000, p. 155) that critical gender studies should not seek to postulate an alternative model to a mainstream/masculinist discourse but rather offer a critique of it that supports:

a move away from conventional ideas on management, not so much a move to celebrating a feminine model intimately coupled to a stereotypical, idealised and essentialistic view on talents and orientations contingent upon the female sex.

Since, as they further note,

... we are not convinced that too much emphasis should be given to the gender vocabulary. Feminine leadership is tricky to disconnect from stereotypes and can easily restrain both women and men. Using other critical vocabularies or at last alternating between gender and other kinds of language is thus recommended.

Revealing the gendered fundamentals of rationality as this article has attempted to do, is therefore in itself a form of critique that could open up alternatives to the traditional dichotomy of masculine and feminine. For instance, a critique of strategic management would not stop with a critique of its masculine rationality. With or without using the label of gender-specific vocabulary, a feminist critique could actively explore other forms of rationality developed by philosophers such as Rorty (1989) or Vattimo (1988). It could de- and re-construct strategy beyond the dualism of feminine/masculine and explore ways of understanding and conceptualizing it differently (for such an attempt see Cummings, 2002). In this way, rationality is not dismissed but is conceptualized as more refined, holistic and complex, reflecting a practice beyond mere instrumental rationality or a division between masculine/feminine (see Martin *et al.*, 1998).

Further, there is value, it would seem, in shifting attention away from organizational bureaucratic structures and the discussion about whether there can be 'feminine bureaucracies' or not (see Due Billing, 1994; Ferguson, 1984). Rather, the analysis conducted in this article implies a shift in attention towards the informal practices and the cultures that enact gendered organizational realities. Such a shift could provide both a fresh theoretical perspective as well as practical insights into the complex web of gendered organizational realities. Rubin (1997), for instance, shows through an empirical analysis of organizational selection processes, that ostensibly rational bureaucratic rules are no guarantee of less gendered realities. Rather, as Rubin (1997, p. 31) demonstrates, the selection criteria are implicitly gendered and masculine. 'A "sameness" model of equality superimposed on existing bureaucratic organizations has clearly not succeeded in bringing about a real transformation of organizational gender relations and the gender of organizational power'. Thus it is important to move beyond the false dichotomy between masculine/feminine in order to question 'the universalised and essentialized oppositional gender categories which persist' (Rubin, 1997, p. 32). However, it is not the bureaucratic structures embodied

in rules that suppress women, but the cultural context that, implicitly and silently, excludes them. As Bond states:

... culture, as it was and had been understood for a significant period of time, was the single most important factor in creating an environment in which women were undermined and/or blocked from assuming the highest levels of leadership. Analysing these culturally embedded micro-practices, where masculinity and rationality meet becomes thus a valuable research strategy for scholars in the field of gender studies. (Bond, 2000, p. 80)

Gender implicitly works at shaping organizational rationality. It is the link, clearly established in this article, between masculinity and rationality that ensures and sustains gender inequalities on all levels. As a woman academic interviewed by Thomas and Davies emphatically stated:

I'm sure that it would be very hard to prove that I am explicitly excluded, but I think there are other factors that go into the fact I am excluded due to my sex. (2002, p. 379)

Analysing the gendered assumptions underlying rationality captures the 'other factors' that silently and powerfully structure human relations. Such critical discourses and narratives are but one thread in the larger narrative of practical and academic organizational discourse. Narratives are, as Ely and Meyerson argue (2001, p. 604) 'not just stories told *within* social contexts; they are social practices that are *constitutive* of social contexts.' Thus narratives, such as the one developed in this article, that make assumptions about gender explicit reflect not only a theoretical interest but are a vital component of and a potential trigger for organizational change.

Notes

1. Using the term 'rationality' in the singular form is not meant to signify that conceptions of rationality have been stable throughout history. The concept of rationality has changed over time. However, this article will show that equally, over time there has been a basic and underlying notion of masculinity embedded in and inextricably interlinked with the concept of rationality (Nagl-Docekal, 1999). This is best seen, but not only seen, in the form of rationality known as instrumental reason. The nature of the concept of masculinity as used in this article should be thought of in a similar way. As Rutherford (2001, p. 327) argues, the 'terms masculinity and femininity pertain to the socially generated consensus of what it means to be a man or a woman'. Thus masculinity can be described as hard, competitive, objective, rational, and analytic (see Due Billing and Alvesson, 2000, p. 146). Recognizing the multiplicity of the concept of masculinity and its change in lifetime, Kerfoot and Knights describe its core as a particular instrumental form of

rational control (Kerfoot and Knights, 1996; for an overview see Mac An Hill, 1996; Pease, 2000; Whitehead, 2000). Hearn emphasises the complexity of masculinities (2001). To such a complex concept of 'multiple masculinities' see Collinson and Hearn (1996) who argue that masculinity is interconnected with different sites such as the home, the shopfloor, or the office. Finally, Hearn (1996) critically discusses the limitations of the concept of masculinity.

2. A historical analysis can clearly demonstrate the reasons for the prevailing gendered reality of organizational discourse. Using Foucault's genealogical approach (1977) this article focuses on the emergence of the western concept of rationality, its link to masculinity and how it has powerfully shaped organizational discourse. It would be naïve, however, to assume that analysing discourses means automatically understanding the 'real world'. Words and deeds are, in reality, loosely coupled. But, as recent research has highlighted (Mauws and Philips, 1995; Otzel and Hintz, 2001; Phillips and Hardy, 1997), it may be even more naïve to forget that this discourse informs, shapes and is enacted in organizational practices (Ferguson, 1994; Leonard, 2002). Discourse, in Foucauldian terms, is not just the order of language or representation; discourse, including what we refer to as 'discourse of management and organization theory' in this article, is, as well, 'a structuring principle which governs beliefs and practices, 'words' and 'things', in such a way as to produce a certain network of material relations' (McNay, 1994, p. 69). Discourse, in this sense, includes material as well as linguistic practices. This interpretation of discourse thus refers: to both the production of knowledge through language and representation *and* the way that knowledge is institutionalized, shaping social practices and cultural technologies and setting new practices and technologies into play. (du Gay *et al.*, 1996, p. 266)

Analysing discourses means, thus, implicitly, analysing practices and the frames within they occur. It means, maybe more importantly, understanding these frames in order to find a space outside the existing constraints, where different, maybe less gendered realities can be enacted.

3. This point has been elaborated and re-evaluated in terms of contemporary perspectives on bureaucracy, rationality and masculinity (Due Billing, 1994; Eisenstein, 1995; Ferguson, 1984). Drawing on the debate between liberal and (more) radical approaches to feminist studies, one can say that the former tries primarily to gain access to established institutions, whereas the latter aims to transform these institutions (Ferguson, 1984, p. 4). The radical argument, presented by Ferguson (1984, p. ix) is that:

the power structures of bureaucratic capitalist society as a primary source of the oppression of women and men (advocate) the elimination of such structures rather than their amelioration. . . . The argument that organizations will somehow be altered simply by virtue of recruiting women into them is . . . fallacious. To equate the upward mobility of individual women with the success of feminism is simply to embrace a new and self-serving version of the old laissez-faire myth that the sum of the self-interests of each individual equals the interest of the whole.

The feminist discourse is therefore neither an extension of bureaucratic forms nor a transformation of them but 'rather a genuinely *radical* voice in opposition' (Ferguson, 1984, p. 29). Bureaucracy and the masculine rationality that it implicitly

embodies, should be abandoned since there can be no 'feminine' bureaucracy. Criticizing Ferguson, Due Billing (1994, p. 180) argues for a change of bureaucracies from within through getting rid 'of the specific dimensions of bureaucracy that are a problem'. As she argues, 'The idea of a basic, essential contradiction between feminism and bureaucracy must be rejected. . . . It seems to be possible to create "soft" bureaucracies'. (1994, p. 190). (See Eisenstein's (1995) analysis of the 'Australian femocratic experiment' as an example of a changing bureaucracy).

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