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Beyond rationality: feminist imaginings on postmodern management/organisations as praxis

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Beyond rationality: feminist imaginings on postmodern management/organisations as praxis

Guest Editor
Ngaire Bissett

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"Don't write about it": writing "the other" for the ivory basement

Joan Eveline and Michael Booth

Keywords Feminism, Higher education, Skills, Australia

This paper uses ethnographic data from an Australian university to explore constructs of "otherness" focusing on women in lower-level university work. The work of these women, who hold both academic and non-academic staff positions, takes place in the spatial and symbolic locale we call the "ivory basement". Poststructural feminism provides the basis for an examination of the contradictions and subtleties of their identity work as they respond to the pressures of restructuring and managerialism. Faced with a request from these women for certain aspects of their relational work to remain unseen, unrecognised and unspoken, this study assents to that request and focuses instead on options for how poststructural feminism might elaborate their identity work stories. The paper is concerned with the tensions between women's own struggle with being positioned as "other" and poststructural feminist theorizing of the same.

Entrepreneur-mentality, gender and the study of women entrepreneurs

Attila Bruni, Silvia Gherardi and Barbara Poggio

Keywords Entrepreneurs, Entrepreneurialism, Women, Gender

Uses the neologism "entrepreneur mentality" – paying implicit homage to Foucault's govermentality – to highlight how an entrepreneurial discourse is mobilized as a system of thinking about women entrepreneurs which is able to make some form of that activity thinkable and practicable, namely: who can be an entrepreneur, what entrepreneurship is, what or who is managed by that form of governance of economic relations? Discourses on women entrepreneurs are linguistic practices that create truth effects. Argues that social studies of women entrepreneurs tend to reproduce an androcentric entrepreneur mentality that makes hegemonic masculinity invisible. They portray women's organizations as "the other", and sustain social expectations of their difference, thereby implicitly reproducing male experience as a preferred normative value. Taking a deconstructive gaze on how an entrepreneur-mentality discourse is gendered, reveals the gender sub-text underpinning the practices of the scientific community that study women entrepreneurs and, in so doing, open a space to question them.

Powerful discourses for social service:: a feminist poststructural and action inquiry

Bev Gatenby and Karen Morrison Hume

Keywords Social services, Social justice, Managerialism, Feminism, New Zealand

Describes an action research project in a church affiliated, community-based social service organisation in Aotearoa, New Zealand, in which feminist and poststructural discourse theory is drawn on to examine collaboratively the discourses available and impinging upon the work of staff developing a residential service for women and children. Managerial, psychology and human rights discourses dominated the possibilities for the work. Some staff chose to resist these by articulating and positioning themselves within social justice, communitarian and liberation theology discourses.

Screwing diversity out of the workers? Reading diversity

Deborah Jones

Keywords Feminism, Equal opportunities, New Zealand

"Managing diversity" has emerged as a new and contested vocabulary for addressing issues of difference in organisations. This paper uses a New Zealand case study to exemplify a feminist post-structuralist reading of managing diversity. The paper argues that a feminist post-structuralist approach not only addresses feminist theoretical debates about identity, equality and difference, but also opens up new opportunities for practitioners in managing diversity and equal employment opportunities (EEO) to reflect on their own organisational change practice. The paper presents three readings of managing diversity:

a discourse of exploitation which provides oppositional readings of managing diversity as a form of human resource management; a discourse of difference, drawing on refusals of managing diversity in accounts from minority group perspectives; and a discourse of equality where EEO practitioners have questioned managing diversity in the context of EEO.

Unravelling Woomera: lip sewing, morphology and dystopia

Julie Wolfram Cox and Stella Minahan

Keywords Immigrants, Feminism, Social groups, Australia

Presents a gendered interpretation of reports of protests in 2000-2002 among asylum seekers held at Australia's recently closed Woomera Detention Centre, discussing instances of lip sewing that evoked strong reaction from the Australian Government, people and press. Suggests that an Irigarayan gendered reading of lip sewing assists in understanding these examples of self-harm, supplementing feminist readings of craft, and calling attention to local enactments of gender in both refugee studies and in organizational development and change.

Contested rationalities, contested organizations: feminist and postmodernist visions

Catherine Casey

Keywords Postmodernism, Feminism, Organizational analysis

Postmodernist contestations of modernist economic and organizational rationalities have made immense contributions to organizational analysis. A current direction in critical theory now, working through the postmodernist critique, seeks new conceptions of organizations and sources for the revitalization of organizational life. In particular, feminist criticism drawing on, and contributing to, postmodern forms of inquiry and interpretation, offers new visions of critical organizational analysis. This article

addresses feminist postmodern critiques, and particularly discusses two feminist contributions developed out of serious critical engagement with postmodernist thought: eco-feminism and conceptions of "relational autonomy", of agentic, social subjectivity.

Diversity writ large: forging the link between diverse people and diverse organisational possibilities

Ngaire Bissett

Keywords Equal opportunities, Feminism, Organizational culture

Both postmodernism and corporate culturalism, each in distinctly different ways, have had the effect of suppressing links between diverse populations and identity politics in regards to the work environment. For example, the "politics of difference" debates of the 1980s began to take on ominous developments in the 1990s with the dispersal of multiple identity characteristics into a fragmented morass. In turn, personal diversity attributes have been collapsed into the agenda of corporate cultural cloning such that an individual's presentation of self is expected to conform to malestream managerial characterisations. However, there is evidence of contradictory impulses associated with these events, which provides space to envisage a contemporary form of community-orientated activism that avoids the dilemmas of overly disparate difference approaches and narrowly prescribed models of subjectivity. This article describes how such a committed social movement politic might be operationalised in organisational/teaching contexts. The objective is to demonstrate the relevance of poststructural feminist ideas of communities of practice and notions of relationalism as a substantial charter for enriching organisational life. Ironically, in the current "new economy" environment, the discourse of management itself provides a means for such an endeavour to be legitimated. The article addresses the crucial factors required to achieve this substantive change process via expanded notions of difference, diversity and hybridity.

Guest editorial

About the Guest Editor *Dr Ngaire Bissett directs an MBA International programme at Griffith University's Business School, Queensland, Australia. Ngaire originally trained as an intradisciplinary social and political analyst and is committed to this type of broad-ranging perspective. She has studied and taught at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, Otago University, New Zealand, and various Australian universities. In a prior life, reflecting her working-class origins, she was employed as a mail delivery person, a heavy vehicle driver, a waitress, and a shorthand typist. She currently teaches a course entitled "Managing and Leading People" to groups of young graduate students on an MBA programme comprised of over 50 different nationalities. Ngaire's research and teaching interests coincide in the area of diversity management. Her empirical research focuses on studying particular avant-garde companies in this field. This specialism has arisen from her commitment to principles of equity and a belief in the power of democratic participative processes to enrich individual and organisational life. Ngaire thus attempts to run her teaching courses in a fully participatory mode. This leads to access to exciting, exhilarating experiences, as she witnesses the immense creative potential of her students. Her editorial role in this journal reflects a desire to be involved in forging challenging visions wherever possible. E-mail: n.bissett@griffith.edu.au*

Introduction

The initial idea behind this edition was to bring to the attention of the "centre" a raft of academic material usually considered to be "marginal". It will become clear when reading the texts, that maintaining such dualist prepositions, and practices, merely denies the mainstream access to extremely powerful ideas that have great resonance for organisational functioning, whether public or private. The other intention was to provide a forum to show off the diverse range of avant-garde intellectualising that is being enacted in a particular feminist space and to demonstrate the relevance of these imaginings to our everyday organisational experiences. The excessively segmented empiricist mentality that dominates many of our societies means there are few venues given over to displaying this type of praxis work.

An incidental outcome has been the recording of the aftermath of the widespread introduction of economic rationalism, and its accompanying policies of deregulation and privatisation, in terms of community effects. The breadth of scope covered in this edition overwhelmingly demonstrates, that despite the globalising pressures of these institutional forces, at the local level, people continue to resist the negative elements of their imposition. Given my contention of a growing legitimacy crisis related to the inadequacy of management knowledge/practice to meet the demands of the new global order, my hope is that journal editions like this one might serve as a locus, in the future, for scholars to dialogue with practising managers and organisational participants regarding the development of more contextually relevant approaches to management.

As Guest Editor I have been extremely fortunate to have my aspirations more than fulfilled by the quality of the submission received. I have also been privileged to work with individuals who, though facing heightened pressures of academic life (as Eveline and Booth effectively demonstrate), gave of their time, and spirit, generously to assist

me in the production process. These conversations have allowed me to participate in a rather special "subjects-in-community", dedicated to enriching the lives of all organisational participants.

Bearing in mind that this edition is likely to be read by novice readers, in relation to the fields of postmodern/poststructural feminism, I have structured the journal such that the preliminary articles (Eveline and Booth, Bruni, Gerardi and Poggio) introduce the concepts, philosophy and sets of assumptions by reference to readily accessible empirical work and comparative theoretical exposés. This is followed by two user-friendly case studies (Gatenby and Morrison Hume, and Jones) that explicitly demonstrate the precepts of poststructural feminist (PSF) discourse analysis. In so doing they strengthen our comprehension of the value of this perspective. The latter section of the journal is comprised of a distinctive PSF reading of a topical global issue (Cox and Minahan). The authors' reframing of a critical incidence illuminates the potential of this storytelling approach. The final two papers (Casey, and Bissett) explore, in some depth, the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of postmodern/poststructural feminism that pose a series of challenges to current managerial*ist* conceptions and practices. They chart noteworthy emerging, ethically "embodied" visions, and explore their significance pertaining to future alternative organisational scenarios. While these submissions may be more conceptually challenging for the new reader to this field, if the edition is perused in sequence, the significant transformational processes outlined are more likely to be apprehended.

Content

The issue commences with Joan Eveline and Michael Booth's lucid article, entitled "Don't write about it: writing 'the other' for the ivory basement". Displacing the common tendency to concentrate on the "ivory tower" end of university experience, their ethnographic study documents the experiences of female staff positioned at the other end of the hierarchy; noting how their input, and particularist needs, are often ignored by the institution. Reflecting the open-ended process of self-reflexivity, called for in the methodology of PSF, Joan and Michael productively discuss the dilemma they faced when their respondents denied them the right to name the *silences* that appeared to reflect significant repressive practices. By focusing on the contradictions and ambivalences associated with organisational habits, they demonstrate the distinctive insights to be gained from a perspective that works productively with such occurrences. For example, the denial is re-framed as resistance, as we learn that the respondents seek to preserve certain unnamed activities as part of a self-determining space. In exploring the relationships between the construction of identity, power relations and specific cultural/social contexts, the authors allow us to see that these patterns of association are by no means straightforward. Moreover, the new managerial discourses of self-regulation are shown to produce a number of paradoxes in relation to organisational praxis.

The second paper by Attila Bruni, Sylvia Gherardi and Barbara Poggio entitled, "Entrepreneur-mentality, gender and the study of women entrepreneurs", unpacks the implications of the gendered discourses surrounding that privileged management conception, "the entrepreneur". Following the principles of discourse analysis, they identify the connections between language, subjectivity, and discursive formations, in terms of images of/implications for female entrepreneurs. Unsettling taken-for-granted

notions of the impartial research scientist (manager), the authors reveal the same flawed, reductionist assumptions, which prevail in popular culture, replicated in the various studies of women entrepreneurs. Alerting the reader to the instability – and the diminished depictions – that underpin these representational systems, the authors show that both masculin*ist* and femin*ine* stereotypical categories are themselves destabilised by contemporary organisational requirements.

Bev Gatenby and Karen Morrison Hume's article entitled, "Powerful discourses for social service: a feminist poststructural and action inquiry" follows. This submission represents the most directly intentional attempt, in the edition, to translate the ideas of PSF into practice. Bev and Karen took on the challenge to convey to their fellow workers the idea that a PSF mindset might aid them in their transformational objectives. In attempting to "walk the talk", the authors supplemented PSF with an action inquiry methodology, in order to ground the change processes. The study reflects their particular sensitivity to the collaborative, and non-dogmatic ethos of PSF. Bev and Karen provided a lens through which the participants could reflect on their work-life relationships, and follow through in self-determining ways. However, they note that, given the dynamic nature of work environments, the action inquiry and the PSF reflexivity process, had many contradictory implications.

Deborah Jones's article entitled "Screwing diversity out of the workers? Reading diversity" also applies a PSF "denaturalising" form of analysis to reveal how particular modes of representation produce distinctive accounts of identity. Taking up a relevant theme, managing diversity, Deborah reveals a sleight-of-hand whereby managerial discourses frame employees' interests as essentially the same as their own. Yet she perceives these "new times" HRM discourses as providing a platform on which more critical performances can be played out. Juxtapositioning different narrative accounts, as relayed by the various actors in the case study, we gain insights into how ordinary people resist hegemonic representations in their local environs. Deborah's own PSF reading displays the benefits of self-reflexivity by refusing closure. This element of open-endedness allows us, as readers, to metaphorically enter the text.

Julie Wolfram Cox and Stella Minahan's paper entitled, "Unravelling Woomera: lip sewing, morphology and dystopia", represents an innovative attempt to utilise PSF from which to craft a reflective reading of the politics associated with refugee self-harm practices. Julie and Stella link particular kinds of signification with the act of lip sewing, drawing analogies between race and gender depictions. They refer to the rigidly enforced centre/margin depictions that dominate conservative political discourses, illustrating the overlap between racially marked, "demonising of the other", practices and gendered representations. Calling on the important work of the French feminist Irigaray, they take the opportunity to turn the discourse on its head. They apply her techniques of mimicry, and emphasis on the "plurality" of female morphology, as symbols of resistance to the confining uniformity of phallocentric discourses. Though its focus may initially appear as somewhat tangentially linked to organisational change, nonetheless the authors identify important institutional proclivities and make a case for Irigaray's analyses to be given far greater attention in organisation studies. Moreover, as well as furthering our understanding of PSF, Julie and Stella distinguish a need for specific types of in-depth study of the role gender plays in organisational development and change settings.

Catherine Casey produces a particularly erudite contribution entitled, "Contested rationalities, contested organizations: feminist and postmodernist visions" in which she situates feminism within the recent debates surrounding postmodern and critical theory. Catherine identifies two particular trajectories that produce advantage from this encounter offering feminist inspired promise regarding: the agency of the social subject; and the relationship between organisational practice and environmental destruction. She demonstrates that this strand of contemporary feminist analysis occupies a space distinct from either modernist foundational precepts or postmodern disavowals of materiality. This facilitates a reframing of the potential for responsible ethical action in an indeterminate globalised world. A substantive deconstruction of the assumptions of economic rationality, as related to organisational practice, has led to a "revitalisation" of ecological and social movement morality concerns. Catherine demonstrates that the post-postmodern feminists, involved in this process, translate the abstractions of philosophy into embodied appraisals of subjectivity and agency. The result is the emergence of a social-self, operating as a dynamic, relationally orientated, yet self-directed being. She identifies the related impulse that unites these two inspirational contributions as their refusal to maintain the modernist instrumental fallacy of the split between nature and culture.

Ngaire Bissett's article, entitled "Diversity writ large: forging the link between diverse people and diverse organisational possibilities", refers to a parallel "new managerial" discursive call for the creation of an ethnically based, moral foundation, to guide the employment relationship of the future and revamp organisation-wide systems. She identifies deeply embedded, reductionist modernist, assumptions, and related practices, as preventing this great leap forward into a more humanistically inspired domain. Following this deconstructionist activity, Ngaire also focuses on forging a project of reconstruction. Like the previous authors, her vision centres on the PSF attention to "relationalism". Working with its various incarnations (relatedness, relationship orientation, etc), Ngaire utilises this principle, and its associated practices, to take us as subjects into non-idealistic forms of postmodern community. She attempts to demonstrate how and why such ideas might have specific relevance to organisations of the future in serving both the *mutualist* objectives of managers and employee desires.

Casey and Bissett each imply a critical disjuncture is at hand, indicating their alternative visions should be all the more compelling. Here they deal directly with the overall theme of this journal regarding organisational change. However, all of the articles, in deconstructing dominant managerialist discourses and naming novel processes of resistance, contribute to our understanding of the pressing need for substantive mechanisms of change. These calls not only relate to persisting themes of systemic inequality of treatment affecting specific groups but fundamentally refer to the capacity of organisations to survive in this "new times" environment. It is the complex underlying realities identified by these authors that proffers this edition as a significant resource for practising managers in particular, who may already be troubled by many of the issues exposed by the authors. While organisations may be sites of ongoing struggle over the making of meaning, and reflect divergent interests, in the end they are privileged locations in terms of potential to operate as "subjects-in-communities".

Ngaire Bissett

"Don't write about it"
Writing "the other" for the ivory basement

Joan Eveline and Michael Booth
University of Western Australia, Murdoch University, Crawley, Australia

Abstract *This paper uses ethnographic data from an Australian university to explore constructs of "otherness" focusing on women in lower-level university work. The work of these women, who hold both academic and non-academic staff positions, takes place in the spatial and symbolic locale we call the "ivory basement". Poststructural feminism provides the basis for an examination of the contradictions and subtleties of their identity work as they respond to the pressures of restructuring and managerialism. Faced with a request from these women for certain aspects of their relational work to remain unseen, unrecognised and unspoken, this study assents to that request and focuses instead on options for how poststructural feminism might elaborate their identity work stories. The paper is concerned with the tensions between women's own struggle with being positioned as "other" and poststructural feminist theorizing of the same.*

Feminist research and scholarship gives visibility to gender, diversity and difference, and voice to the marginalised and unspoken. Poststructural feminist critiques encourage overt reflexivity around the socially organised nature of knowledge claims, the positionality of the researcher and about hierarchical privilege (Haraway, 1988; Scott, 1988; Weedon, 1987). What does a feminist researcher do, then, when a group of women – the participating subjects of a feminist research project – ask for the unspoken to remain unspeakable, the unrecognised to stay unseen, and their activities to remain hidden?

That was our situation in a feedback session with a group of 30 women staff in a restructuring university we call "Riverside". Most of the women in the group worked in what we refer to as the "ivory basement" (Eveline and Booth, 2002a; Eveline, 2004). They held lower-level university positions – and all had been respondents in an ethnographic study of gender and diversity. Two of the group requested silence about an aspect of their work activities and, although those activities provided clear cases of leadership, it was apparent that most of the women agreed with the tenor of the request. Their pleas were as follows:

Don't write about it, because they will try to stop us from doing it.

Don't write about it, because they will put it in our job descriptions and expect us to do it.

We will not reveal in this paper the specifics of the "it" that these women bade us "don't write about" (both requests related to the same arena of effort). Instead, we shall use a poststructural feminist analysis to ask how hierarchies, bodies and work organisation "perpetuate the myth of immutable feminine qualities" (McNay, 1992, p. 22). By

juxtaposing women's stories of their administrative, relational and emotional labour with our analysis of writings on "othering" from poststructural feminism we raise questions of diversity, subjectivity and agency that a structural account of power would leave invisible.

A number of feminist researchers have posed the overall question of how gender dynamics are managed in universities under pressure (Brooks and Mackinnon, 2001; Currie *et al.*, 2002; Deem, 2003). For most of these the image of the ivory tower crumbling under the weight of corporatising and entrepreneurial tendencies (Benschop and Brouns, 2003) leads to a privileging of the academic work of the university. A search for the extremities of power led us to start from an analysis of the largely invisible organisational and social glue, the administrative, emotional and relational work of the ivory basement.

The paper is organised as follows. It starts with an outline of our methodology and introduces the organisation in question, followed by a short review of poststructural work on managerialism and feminisation in restructuring universities. Under three headings, we then contextualise the women's plea to "don't write about it" by reviewing the stories of their work told by women in mid to lower levels of an Australian university. Our concluding discussion imagines how writing the "other" in poststructural feminism provides options for reading subject positions prompting that plea.

Methodology and background

Organisational researchers, argues Putnam in 1996 (cited in Metcalfe, 2003, p. 15), "need ways to open up text for multiple readings: to decentre authorial authority figures . . . promote reflexivity, and open [the way] to an infinitude of meanings". Our methodology attends to research on identity work – by other poststructural feminists as well as ourselves – to show a multiplicity of answers to the question of how the "signs" of "woman" and "other" place limits on what can be spoken and made visible (Calás and Smirich, 1992, p. 232). Asking how "identity work" (Linstead and Thomas, 2002) among women in the ivory basement is implicated in the disappearing of their administrative and relational labour allows us to see how poststructural feminism can bring to light social actions which are often overlooked or ignored.

For the purposes of this paper we give the name of "Riverside" to the medium-sized Australian university that formed the subject of the ethnography from which we draw our interview data. Employing around 1,000 academic and 1,500 general staff, Riverside has a robust tradition of academic excellence, linked with a strong focus on science, law, agriculture, medicine, engineering and other male dominated professions and enjoys a reputation for being one of the wealthiest universities in Australia. Most of its 16,000 students live within a five-kilometre radius of the expensive, riverside suburb in which its 65-hectare main campus is situated and most of them had placed Riverside as their first preference.

At Riverside a clear status division into "academic" and "general" staff, and a gendering of that division, cuts across the whole hierarchical ordering, a feature common to Australian universities. In Australia the "general" staff category covers a wide spectrum – from registrar and resource management to front-office receptionists, secretaries, security, maintenance, library and legal staff – but it also includes lower-level research and laboratory assistants. Gender divisions operate both

horizontally and vertically, with more women at the lower levels and on the general staff, while most men are found in the higher levels and among academic staff. Even within the academic category, however, gender patterns are shifting, with women now holding a majority of positions among research-only middle-level staff, often in insecure and contract jobs. Ethnicity, sexual orientation, age and disability intersect those gender patterns.

Ethnographic data, collected at Riverside between 1999 and 2002 used interviews, focus groups, documentary analysis and relevant descriptive statistics. The majority of interviews and focus groups were with women in middle and lower ranks of academic and general staff and were designed to give voice to experiences and views of women at those levels. Of 107 participants in 17 focus groups 72 were women. A total of 60 out of 85 in-depth interviews were with women[1]. In the data, discussion of the local, organisational context mingles with wider issues of university restructuring, work intensification, staff development and diversity of cultural backgrounds. Comments from participants in feedback sessions were assessed for inclusion in reports and papers. Although we make no claim that this form of feedback and input creates an equal relationship between researcher and researched, a partnership where those involved have the right to a say and a right of reply is in line with the ethnographic principles of lengthy and complex participation (Atkinson, 2001, p. 5) and with feminist concerns about power effects (Sawicki, 1991).

Managing self and institution: the changing university

For at least two decades, as Thomas and Davies (2002) comment, dramatic changes in the structure, role and management of universities "have been viewed as a managerial assault on the 'ivory tower', [resulting in] the promotion of new professional subjectivities [among academic staff]". The self-regulatory practices prompted by the devolving of accountability, monitoring and competitive entrepreneurialism are increasingly discussed in research on management (Knights and Morgan, 1991; Townley, 1993; Scarbrough, 1998). An ambiguous discourse of self-regulation is clearly evident in today's universities and is embodied in everyday practices of both academics and support staff. The self-managing university operates in the context of devolved responsibility in a competitive marketplace. Paradoxically, however, the autonomous responsibility of individual universities is located within a system where setting industry-wide priorities is outside their control (Blackmore and Sachs, 2001). Marginson (1997) calls this "steering from a distance" through the political fiat of governments.

Self-management involves relaxing direct forms of surveillance and control while increasing requirements for accountability and performance. Contractual capacities, rights and obligations lie at the heart of this reshaped system of management, which Yeatman (1995) calls "new contractualism," and Thomas and Davies (2002) relate to the introduction of new public management (NPM), replete with pressures of managerialism on academic subjectivities. Clarke and Newman (1997) suggest that management "is no longer the sole province of the most senior ... where men are generally to be found, but has cascaded down organisations to the relatively low paid, low-status delivery functions". Similarly, Eveline and Booth (2002a) found that managerial emphases are blurring traditional distinctions between academic professionals and the many other university workers. For the university employee,

self-discipline, self-government, self-assessment, self-protection and individualised personhood are the contractual rights and obligations replacing "paternalistic principles of protection in the employment arena" (Yeatman, 1995, p. 98).

For poststructural feminists a view of power as productive is used to generate a focus on the agentic subject. Foucauldian accounts of power have strongly influenced poststructuralism, wherein subjectivities are constituted through everyday practices (discourses) which are neither unified, nor structured, but are competing and individualising. As Eveline and Booth (2002b) note:

> ... from this viewpoint subjectivity is a contingent, precarious, fluid and contradictory process in which a sense of agency is as significant as constraint. Individual subjects can experience themselves as powerful in one context and powerless in another. Power here is exercised in a context rather than possessed and is not "primarily repressive but productive" (Sawicki, 1991, p. 25), being exercised by individuals over others and on themselves.

From this position, the "identity work" of middle (and lower) managers (and administrative staff) in restructuring organisations (Thomas and Linstead, 2002, p. 88) can be analysed as not only a destabilising and reconfiguring of gendered identity "often characterised by confusion and conflict within the individual; as well as in the context" (Linstead and Thomas, 2002, p. 2) but also as productive and as work by individuals on both others and themselves.

Blackmore and Sachs (2001) emphasise the relational dimension to self-management. Academics, they argue, have to incorporate the self-management paradox of autonomy versus determinism into their work practices. Our contention is that the focus of managerialism and of academic subjectivities are important but in themselves partial analyses of universities and gender. With the influence of NPM and university restructuring, the tasks and expectations shaping the self-managed subject have bled beyond the boundaries of academic subjectivities into those of support and non-academic staff.

Our study, in its focus on the identity work of women in a restructuring ivory basement, draws upon particular poststructural feminist understandings of the gendering of subjectivities to examine relations of power, visibility and "othering". Importantly, it moves away from notions of fixed and stable identities to a productive understanding of shifting subjectivities (Knights, 1990).

Stories of work in the ivory basement
A cultural iron curtain: feminised university space
Despite a rhetoric of collegiality, universities have a long history of status hierarchy, with senior academics at the top and secretaries, cleaners and casual tutors in the basement. At Riverside we found a strong but tacit cultural curtain dividing general and academic staff. Among general staff, demarcation is particularly apparent in the use of university space:

> When I first came here it hit me that there were three chairs that the general staff sat on in the tea room ... you didn't move from them. Then a new head didn't leave us chairs in the corner any more. We had to join the circle with the academics. Some stopped coming to the tea room [FG6].

Such "othering" practices reinforce the devaluing accorded many of the tasks classified as general rather than academic (Wieneke, 1995). They shape administrative work at lower levels as a feminised set of activities.

The activities women urged us not to write about were administrative and relational tasks carried out mainly by both general staff in departments and by lower level teaching staff and researchers. All are support activities, of the sort that Fletcher (1999, p. 33) points out are characterised as a "free resource [by] society in general and organizations in particular". Relational and emotional labour, deeply feminised in gender-segregated workplaces, is noted by Fletcher to be simultaneously both required and devalued. Elaborating the effects of this devaluing for universities Finch (2003, p. 134) expresses the related expectations that then accompany the category "woman" across all levels of university life:

> . . .a university which is quite content to see all its secretaries as women with an unbreachable glass ceiling on their career opportunities. . . is unlikely to be able to make progress towards greater gender equality among its academic staff.

A poststructural feminist perspective calls attention to how women at all levels are situated at least some of the time as "other". In the ivory basement, nurturance and care is neither "work" nor indispensable. Identity work for women in the ivory basement involves marshalling and refusing gendered subjectivities while working with and against the production of general staff as the devalued "other" to academics:

> It is as if academics are put two feet above the ground. . . but a general staff woman is never two feet off the ground [FG32].

Grounding the feminine as "other" to the privileged norm (Irigaray, 1985a) enacts a social organisation of invisible work, unrecognised effort and diminished agency. At Riverside, an organised separation of hierarchised efforts, rewards and spaces, is a key marker of status. Academics "perform" the valued work of research, planning and administration, in the privacy of their own offices, their book-lined studies. Lower level administrative staff and casual tutors service both procedures and people. They smooth out conflict, recreate order and soothe academic outbursts and crying students:

> Overall everyone gets on well, but the general staff have to deal constantly with conflict. You know when it is going to erupt, who is going to do it, the timing. The academic staff can walk away back into their rooms and shut the door, and we have to continually deal with it . . . [FG12].

Outbursts, personal crises and conflict management mark the space of general staff as a feminised locale. Identity work becomes an agentic categorising of oneself as "other", an inhabitant of a place either beyond or within the symbolic privilege of the ivory tower. One focus group member passed on the advice on self-managing this exclusion she had been given years before:

> Don't ever get involved in the academics' culture. Hold your peace and don't try to work it out, because you'll be the one who suffers [FG1].

Higher level administrative staff members and most academics beyond the lowest level have gate-keepers, regulating and restricting access to their space and time and shaping their work efforts as valuable and essential. The output of those who service this system becomes invisible work:

> . . . where this woman worked had the front counter and the mailboxes. People would . . . get their mail out, chat to their colleagues, and talk across this woman . . . students would be

coming to the counter – she'd be trying to deal with them. There was no conception that this was somebody's workspace [FG11].

Cultural demarcation into valued and invisible work inhibits a sense of autonomy and achievement for general staff. They speak of constant interruptions, demands on their time and incursions into their working space:

You find out that your office isn't your own ... Academics just walk straight in. You are on the 'phone with a student who is upset or needs help and people come and they sit down and start talking to you [FG6].

The secondary status of general staff is reinforced through university policies on promotion, career development and decision making.

Skill and invisibility
At Riverside, restructuring has meant general staff transferring from one locale to another their skills and corporate knowledge, and inevitably gaining new skills. With less resources and heavier workloads, they strive, no less than academics, for clarity and fair dealing, negotiating new understandings. They develop new areas of skill, such as budgeting, student enrolments, and Web management:

... the head of department is technically the person who runs the budget. But you have a chat around the place and find out who does all the work with money in departments and it is not the head of department, it is people at level 3 and 4 [FG7].

As the range and skill levels of expected tasks increases, identity work involves a shift away from "secretary" to "administrator":

You're pretty much the senior administrator in the department, not the secretary... a lot of statutory regulations are now to do with Health and Safety, Equity, Disability [FG6].

Nonetheless, the credit for these higher-level skills is added between the lines of an academic's curriculum vitae:

A secretary is expected to do the budgeting, to do the accounts, to run the publishing, even to write things like regulations and policies, even though it goes through the Head who is officially writing it [FG7].

In our study, access to corporate knowledge and unannounced decisions, through liaising with central administration and other faculty divisions, means that departmental general staff carry in their heads a broad map of how the university operates. This compares with the relatively single-minded focus of many busy academics, who primarily concentrate on their specialised disciplines. As one female professor wryly observed, "If I want to know what's going on behind the scenes, I ask a woman in the front office". Despite occasional recognition, the skills of general staff are hard for most academics to characterise in their own terms, so they are readily discounted. A senior male on general staff recalled:

The other day I had an experience in which someone senior, someone very senior said to me "What on earth can someone without a bachelor's degree have to offer?"[MG3].

While academic managers typically gain recognition for their administrative activities, the gendered organisation of tasks, bodies and values shapes different consequences for women and men. An academic woman noted the power dimensions of gender: "a

male would be called a departmental manager at two levels above on the pay scales" [FA5]. Lower level comparison of male and female work was missing:

> What really bugs me is that they haven't done an itemised comparison of the work of a lab. technician and say an admin. assistant or an admin. secretary [FG7].

In this framework, relational work, however complex and time-consuming, can become dismissed as everyday nicety and ordinary friendliness. It remains the hidden work of women, anonymous, and given no attention – so long as the office functions:

> Half the academics wouldn't even know which women did what when – the job was just done [FG7].

Thomas and Davies (2002, p. 390) explain such invisibility as an outcome of NPM:

> The "new" discourses promote new forms of masculinities... The profile of the committed, single-focused academic is seen to comply with masculine discourses of competitiveness, instrumentality and individuality ... [leaving many women] feeling, as women, marginalised, silenced, the "other".

We have to be "strong": women managing the relational and emotional

Identity work for male academics means denying skills built around emotional concerns and personal character (Currie *et al.*, 2002; Deem, 2003, p. 253). Middle-level women managers are often seen as intent on overcoming the "confusion and conflict" of their subjective positions (Linstead and Thomas, 2002, p. 2). Yet the identity work of lower level administrative women in these university restructuring contexts can be focused as readily on "being strong", In what follows, we explore such identity work as an agentic response to being fixed within the same/difference dimensions of day-to-day, readily available, but hegemonic and masculine focused, language.

There is a link here to what Hochschild (1983) called "emotional labour". For the women on general staff, identity work involves a call for calm effectiveness:

> When you see this conflict around you it is best to keep your mouth shut ... learn to be quiet because of what you overhear [FG1].

Tact threads into a subject position of the emotionally unperturbed:

> [The head] was yelling at me simply because I was the person who was there, when what he was upset about was an academic who was just never there [FG8].

What starts as a "tantrum" can proceed towards disrespect and bullying behaviour, requiring a response:

> He was a nice caring person mostly but all of a sudden you had someone throwing tantrums and swearing. It took a lot of guts to stand up and tell him not to speak to me like that again [FG8].

The identity work of women can thus become focused as readily on courage, and agency, as on overcoming confusion and conflict. Exploring such identity work as resistance to being fixed within same/difference dimensions of hegemonic and masculine focused language, can call attention to how the "body of woman and the body of text [can] represent fluid and overlapping construction processes" (Metcalfe, 2003, p. 10). In placing women as knowing subjects, Metcalfe draws on Irigaray's

(1985a, b) sense of writing as countering Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, which gives no place for the feminine except as "lack" (an "other" whose meaning is dependent on the "same").

In her book, *Tempered Radicals*, Meyerson (2001) sifts through the deliberate acts of everyday leadership of those who want to cautiously change their organisations without jeopardising a hard-won career. Observation of Riverside indicated similar moments of subjectivity, taken up by women across all levels. For example, in a focus group with one of the women's support networks, a woman on general staff outlined an issue she faced in her department and asked the group's advice. Others joined in to say what they had done about similar problems, filling gaps in departmental information flows and encouraging each other to be assertive, decisive and determined:

A: How do you cope with the workload? We've lost two staff and yet there's more students. . . I'm working till 7:00 at night.

B: I arranged with my department head for a morning each week to work at home. I get a clear run (on the paper work) that way.

A: Can anyone do that? Is there some kind of rule or something?

B: As far as I know it's open to all general staff [to do]. Providing your work station's approved and such like, and your department agrees.

C: That wouldn't suit me. I like to keep home and work separate.

D: Me too, and my boss agreed I [can] have a room and close the door for two mornings each week. I hang out the "don't disturb" and that's it.

Here identity work involved finding ways to negotiate personal, relational and departmental change. Yet as this was done in these groups through conversation and collaboration with others, identity work also incorporates the politics of a collective identity:

Go and ask for it, be strong . . . we have to be strong and stand up for ourselves and say "look I know 20 women standing up to this" [FG15].

In our concluding discussion, we pose three options for framing the subjectivities of those women in our feedback session who said "don't write about it". Each of these options is based on a poststructural feminist attempt to disrupt the category "woman" while maintaining "the analytical power of the category" (Barry *et al.*, 2003, p. 6). This implies a new "writing of the other" for poststructural feminism.

"Don't write about it": poststructuralist feminism writing the "other"

Through their work on the gendering of the managerial subject, Kerfoot and Knights (1998) opened a space for characterising the confusion and conflict of identity construction. Useful for us in providing a story of women's identity work in the ivory basement is their narrating of the subjective positionality of managers' subordinates. They argue that subordinates become managers of tension. Routinely, "smoothing relationships and displacing of stresses" along with watching for "the mood swings of managers" shapes the subject of feminine passivity (Kerfoot and Knights, 1998, p. 9). Moreover, in theorising the subjectivities of organisational subordinates, they construe that a "model of what is womanhood [becomes] bound up in an image of passivity that

is especially compatible with the more subordinate ranks of organizations". Despite a qualifier that their framework of feminine versus masculine is "not denying multiple femininities" the only alternative subject positions to dominant competitive masculinity are, they state, "feminine passivity and some less assertive masculinities" Kerfoot and Knights (1998, p. 10). Importantly, Kerfoot and Knights (1998, p. 10) claim that these subordinate subject positions "find no language with which to express" demands for greater participation in decision making. In sum, they understand feminine passivity "as an often 'reluctant collaborator' in what can be seen as a silencing of women's authority and fuller participation in organizations".

Kerfoot and Knights (1998) offer us a viable option for interpreting the "don't write about it" of the women in the ivory basement. Using their conceptual framework we could craft a narrative of subjectivity based on women unable to construct a discourse to express their sense of authority and participation in organizationally acceptable terms. In effect the women who said, "don't write about it" (whose reluctance to be given visibility is linked to their concern for how their superordinates might control their activities) inadvertently enact the subject position of the passive feminine organisational subordinate.

Kerfoot and Knights (1998) are somewhat aware of their failure to move beyond a same-difference dualism of masculine versus feminine subjectivities. At the end of their paper they ask: "are we to celebrate the marginality of femininity to organizational life, recognizing such outsider status as a strength and a power for women to remain uncontaminated with the instrumental and degrading way in which human beings are treated within them?" They note the possibility of turning to Irigaray for an alternative to an "instrumental mode of being that attempts to secure self through identity" (Kerfoot and Knights, 1998, p. 23). Significantly, however, their own writing practice suggests that in the main the feminine and the masculine tend to be categorised in oppositional terms.

The conceptual framework of Prichard and Deem (1999) combines labour process theory and poststructuralist feminism with the aim of making visible the feminisation in the construction of the manager in corporate colleges in England. Their themes are the deskilling of managerial work and the distribution of the managerial subject position. Restructuring of management, they argue, takes place "between the practices that produce the managerial subject position, their conditions of plausibility and their resonance with other subject positions" (Prichard and Deem, 1999, p. 328). They characterise the identity work of women managers as "the delicate, emotional and highly politicised discursive work of increasing effort and reorienting the professional identities of the new 'manager's' colleagues" and show how a number of women recruited into middle management struggle as they move back and forth "between a 'people-centred' and 'monetary' ethos" (Prichard and Deem, 1999, p. 329). For Prichard and Deem (1999, p. 338) "the reflexive, self-monitoring processes embedded in the new audit, funding and appraisal processes" inevitably "force" these women to become the sort of manager they do not wish to be.

Prichard and Deem's framework would explain the women who said "don't write about it" as attempting to avoid increased managerial surveillance and control. The reasons furnished by the women would provide the evidence. These were: "because they would stop us from doing it" and "because they would put it in our job descriptions and expect us to do it". Prichard and Deem's framework calls attention to

the devolution of certain managerial functions to lower level workers, and analyses their feminised struggle to resist the commercial ethos. However, there is an inevitable determinism about their posited managerial subject position. Their argument draws on a female head of school who says "I care about my staff, but I'm paid to care about the economic plight that all FE colleges are in ... the manager I want to be is not the manager I'm almost being forced to be" (Prichard and Deem, 1998, p. 338). In analyzing the quote, Prichard and Deem omit her "almost" from any reckoning. They thus remove the way the manager's words modify the inevitability of force. In their final analysis the determined subject of labour process theory looms larger than the agentic subject of poststructural feminism.

This determinism contrasts with Irigarary's (1985b, p. 78) agentic stance, when she writes: "the issue is not one of elaborating a new theory... but of jamming the theoretical machinery itself" . Her work, instead of entering into existing economic or cultural systems, seeks to transform the sameness of difference into an assertion of the uncategorisable "other". In this she models for poststructural feminism a form of self-expression that Fournier (2002) has recently recorded in a study of women farmers in Italy.

Like Irigaray (whose work she does not cite) Fournier's (2002, p. 68) project aims to "suggest a way of thinking about otherness that puts a stop to its dissolving into a play of difference and sameness". Sameness and difference, Fournier points out, are understood in quantities of more or less. O'Brien's (1984) writing of "commatization" explains this another way, where "women [,] blacks [,] gays [,] etc. etc." are the categorised and distributed other to a privileged and unspoken norm. Fournier (2002, p. 79) suggests that, rather than articulating our differences "in terms of a singular privileged norm, from which the 'other' deviates" that we think about women's approach to "otherness" as the "not" of an agentic refusal. These women farmers provide "living examples of the temporal, contextual and shifting nature of the category of 'woman' emphasized by poststructural feminists" (Fournier, 2002, pp. 82-3). They were "peasants" on the margins of the urban bourgeoisie, "women" in male dominated farming, "farmers" rather than farmers' wives, and green-oriented sustainable agriculturalists. Although fleetingly deploying one or other subject position for specific purposes (for example "woman", "farmer", or "mother"), these women refused Fournier's research tendency to settle them into any one such category. As Fournier (2002, p. 82) writes "they were adept at frustrating my (admittedly misplaced) attempts to frame them, pin them down as 'something', by withdrawing from the categories of difference I attempted to throw at them".

Using Fournier's framework we would explain the women saying, "don't write about it", by referring to the power effects of writing, knowledge production and categorising. This conception of the women in the ivory basement catches them as refusing the fixing processes of discourse and language. More than looking for approval of their (feminine) identity or caught by an inevitable force of auditing, funding and appraisal processes, the women of this narrative are continually shaping an uncategorisable "otherness". Both Fournier and Irigaray highlight the ironic moments of women attempting to go beyond the sameness/difference oppositional stance of a hegemonic power/knowledge nexus.

The plea against writing about "it" was made in a particular context of space and time. Our fleshing out of that context cannot be complete. Nor can any writing fully

recapture a specific "it" for any of the participants. Instead our paper offers a number of options for stories that can be told within the frameworks of poststructural feminism. These are stories as much about poststructural feminist research as they are about the ivory basement.

Poststructuralism shares a number of commonalities with feminist thought. Both look for ways to challenge existing power/knowledge structures, to question fundamental assumptions, categories and methods, and to debunk appeals to objectivism by asking who is privileged to speak. Calás and Smircich (1999, p. 665) for example, in their recent review of poststructuralism and organisation, suggest that "the undecidability of meaning, the crisis of representation and the problematization of subject and author" are keys to exposing intertextual pitfalls. Methodological revelation, they add, "locates the moral responsibility of the scholar, who cannot claim innocence from the representational force that she or he brings to the text". Inquiring into the power relations between researcher and researched is as important as voicing the self-understandings of the researched. The optional narratives we construct here, using insights from poststructural feminism, raise problems and questions of reflexivity, which we have not had the space here to interrogate.

Note

1. We code interview data with letters and numbers to denote gender and staff category: G for general staff, A for academic, F and M for female and male respectively.

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Entrepreneur-mentality, gender and the study of women entrepreneurs

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Abstract *Uses the neologism "entrepreneur mentality" – paying implicit homage to Foucault's govermentality – to highlight how an entrepreneurial discourse is mobilized as a system of thinking about women entrepreneurs which is able to make some form of that activity thinkable and practicable, namely: who can be an entrepreneur, what entrepreneurship is, what or who is managed by that form of governance of economic relations? Discourses on women entrepreneurs are linguistic practices that create truth effects. Argues that social studies of women entrepreneurs tend to reproduce an androcentric entrepreneur mentality that makes hegemonic masculinity invisible. They portray women's organizations as "the other", and sustain social expectations of their difference, thereby implicitly reproducing male experience as a preferred normative value. Taking a deconstructive gaze on how an entrepreneur-mentality discourse is gendered, reveals the gender sub-text underpinning the practices of the scientific community that study women entrepreneurs and, in so doing, open a space to question them.*

The post-modern assault on "metanarratives", transcendental reason, and the possibility of objective knowledge interrogates the constitution of the "feminine" within modernity. French (Cixous and Clément, 1986) and Anglo-American feminism (Weedon, 1987) has questioned the claims of certain feminist theories that they articulate a privileged knowing subject, an essential feminine and a universal representation of woman. It is through language that researchers constitute the subject of their knowing, their subjectivities as knowers, and what counts as knowledge as different from what is "not knowledge", i.e. the "other" in the discourse, the silenced term. However, the precarious position of any claim to knowledge opens space for a distinctive feminist politics of knowledge that points to the local operations of power and to the crucial role of discourse in sustaining hegemonic power.

In this regard, poststructuralist analyses focus on language, subjectivity and discourse, highlighting three major issues:

(1) The notion of linguistic differencing, which is central to deconstruction, situates knowledge as conditional upon language. Language, rather than reflecting an

independent reality, constitutes meanings, and every claim to knowledge is inseparable from the language that expresses it.

(2) Since language constitutes meanings, it is the medium through which our sense of ourselves and of situations – our subjectivity – is constructed. In Foucault's (1982) terms, "subjectification" is the process by which individuals objectify themselves so that they may recognize and commit themselves to a particular sense of their subjectivity.

(3) Every claim to knowledge is a discourse. Discourse concerns the particular historical, social and political situatedness of language and of subjectivity. Particular discourses support particular assumptions and processes embodied in institutions (government, family, enterprise), and discursive fields constitute arenas for the struggle over meanings and power. The assumptions and practices that prevail within a discursive field depend on which discourses are dominant.

While modernist viewpoints pursue a project to identify the ways in which knowledge is gendered and to give visibility to feminine knowledge that has been marginalized or suppressed, gender studies informed by a post-modern sensibility problematize subjectivity itself and encourage reflective awareness of its discursive "positioning" (Davies and Harré, 1990; Gherardi, 2003a). In this manner we can become aware of our own incorporative tendencies

In the following sections we will take a deconstructive gaze to modernist studies of women entrepreneurs, including those studies conducted from the women's standpoint. We use the neologism "entrepreneur mentality" – paying implicit homage to Foucault's (1991) term "govermentality" to highlight how an entrepreneurial discourse is mobilized as a system of thinking about the nature of the practice of entrepreneurship (who can be an entrepreneur, what entrepreneurship is, what or who is managed by that form of governance of economic relations). Foucault (1972, p. 49) defines discourses as "practices which systematically form the object of which they speak". In this regard discourses on women entrepreneurs are linguistic practices that create truth effects, i.e. they contribute to the practicing of gender at the very same time that they contribute to the gendering of entrepreneurial practices.

In the first section we introduce the term "entrepreneur mentality" to signal the existence of a discourse on the art of being an entrepreneur and the nature of entrepreneurial practice. An entrepreneur mentality is constructed through the discursive practices of entrepreneurs, the media that represent their achievements, and the scientific texts that expound theories of entrepreneurship, and in turn itself serves as the plot and set of constraints on entrepreneurial action and discourse.

In the following section we highlight the gender sub-text of the entrepreneur mentality discourse, refering to the practices of the scientific community studying women entrepreneurs in order to open a space for reflexive questioning. Modernist social studies have played a part in the discursive construction of entrepreneurship as a male construct which normatively sustains a model of economic rationality allegedly universal and applicable regardless of differences in context, class, gender and race, etc (Ahl, 2002). They do so through a single generic process: the "othering" of the non-male. The term "othering" (Schwalbe et al., 2000) encapsulates the process by which a dominant group defines into existence an inferior group, mobilizing categories,

ideas and behaviours about what marks people out as belonging to these categories. Within a discourse where the feminine is "the other", gender performances in a specific context, such as entrepreneurship, should be judged against the shifting structures of gender accountability (Czarniawska and Hopfl, 2002). Therefore the practices of social scientific research, as products of their time, are involved in the process of "othering" like any other mundane practice, as the above authors note.

Entrepreneur mentality

The discourse, the words we use to define enterpreneurship sets the boundaries of how we think about and study it (Gartner, 1993). Whilst it can be argued that economic theory has still not furnished a thoroughgoing definition of entrepreneurial activity (Bull and Willard, 1993), one may nevertheless note that what we know about entrepreneurship derives mainly from the early and classic studies of the twentieth century (Ogbor, 2000). This involves, Schumpeterian theories, the theories on "enterprise creation" of Collins and Moore (1964), and Knight's (1921) theory of risk. According to these authors, the distinctive feature of entrepreneurial activity is a capacity for innovation. This, however, is regarded as being essentially a quality intrinsic to persons, rather than simultaneously a set of practices, so that some theoreticians have been explicit in espousing a Darwinian and heroic model of entrepreneurship: "However we may personally feel about the entrepreneur, he emerges as essentially more masculine than feminine, more heroic than cowardly" (Collins and Moore, 1964, p. 5).

While this kind of rhetoric has attracted much criticism as a discourse constructed by mingling gender themes with American folklore and Western ethnocentrism (Butler, 1991; Calvert and Ramsey, 1992; Ogbor, 2000; Bruni *et al.*, 2004), it has served as a legitimating discourse for all those theories that have assumed the psychological/individualist characteristics of the entrepreneur as sufficient elements for a theory of entrepreneurship.

Reflection on the social construction of gender and economics (and business economics in particular) started late in comparison with other scientific disciplines. Its most obvious contentions were that men have always dominated the scientific community (Reed, 1996), that gendered attitudes to entrepreneurs make women invisible (Mirchandani, 1999), and that analysis of women's experiences are inadequate, biased or distorted (Ferber and Nelson, 1993). During the same period, management and organization studies took a "gender-neutral" approach to entrepreneurship (Baker *et al.*, 1997), but they did so by studying male entrepreneurs and considering their female counterparts to be only a tiny minority, not worthy of particular attention. Moore and Buttner (1997) maintain that until the beginning of the 1980s almost nothing was known about female entrepreneurs, and that entrepreneurship studies concerned themselves almost entirely with men. It was therefore during the 1980s that scientific discourse on female entrepreneurship and women-run organizations began to gain ground. Public attention was directed towards the matter by claiming that it was an emerging social phenomenon.

The close attention paid by social studies since the 1980s to the relationship between women and the economy in the so-called "developed" countries sheds important light on how it has been explained and how it has been institutionalized. In this regard, Adler and Izraeli (1988, 1994) have pointed to the dramatic increase in

female employment since the Second World War, the interest that institutional actors (political, economic and in research) now show in demographic changes, the globalization of economy with its search for "excellence" and the demand – ever more explicit and insistent – advanced by women for access to higher managerial positions as a consequence of their greater investment in education and training. Evidently, these four explanatory factors – the quantitative importance of an "objective" phenomenon, its subjective salience on a scale of importance, the global economic dimension, and the formation of a social demand – are also the criteria for legitimation of a "scientific fact" among the producers of knowledge. Thus, in the entrepreneur mentality, the increase in women entrepreneurs during the 1990s was an unquestioned, objective fact and a scientific topic (Powell, 1993; Fisher *et al.*, 1993).

We may therefore say that the institutionalization of a line of inquiry situated in the assumption that enterprise is a rational economic activity, and in a conception of gender citizenship through equal opportunity policies (Gherardi, 2003b), has encouraged research on women entrepreneurs, whilst also promoting economic and labour policies targeted specifically on that category of women. Moreover, in a Europe marked by the considerable importance and homogeneity of community policies transposed into national ones and the widespread presence of small and medium enterprises, the issue of women entrepreneurs centres on their importance as actual or potential actors in new models of local development, either because they own or run small firms or because, thanks to public intervention, they can be given opportunities to start new ones.

While the figure of the woman entrepreneur has entered the discourse of the scientific community, the media still clings to the old gender stereotypes in its representation. Referring to the findings of a study of the Italian economic press (Magatti *et al.*, 2000, pp. xxiv-xxvi), for example, female protagonists are frequently described as mavericks, more ruthless and determined than their male counterparts. The conservativism is apparent in stereotypes of the iron lady, the boss's girlfriend who becomes his wife and the heiress so that female entrepreneurs are described mainly in relation to the family business and in terms of their family role. A woman entrepreneur is such inasmuch as she belongs to a family of entrepreneurs; becomes the designated heir flanked by a male spouse or relative. A constant theme is the difficulties of these women in balancing work and domestic duties, under the assumption that their natural place – and their primary social responsibility – is the family.

The role of the media in the social construction of entrepreneurial discourse is all the more important because they replicate themes and notions in the specialist literature, which they merely popularize. Hence, both scientific texts and the specialized press render the "naturally" male gender of the entrepreneur invisible and uncontroversial. Not only is an entrepreneur usually a man but also the rhetorical figure of the "family business" is constructed more on the business than on the family, which is treated as a non-cultural, non-historical, apolitical and even non-emotional entity (Katila, 2002).

Having delineated the cultural context in which entrepreneur-mentality is grounded, and the most widespread reasons in the scientific community for legitimating the study of women entrepreneurs, we may now inquire as to the consequences of such research. We investigate modernist business economics literature and the consequences of their implicit assumptions on gender in terms of a

"gendered" politics of knowledge. We explore their gender subtext: that is, how gender is (re)produced through power-based processes underlying relations presented as abstract, neutral and objectified (Smith, 1990; Benschop and Dooreward, 1998). Our argument will be that their gender subtexts discursively operate – albeit in different ways – towards a common process of "othering" women entrepreneurs and rendering hegemonic masculinity invisible.

"Women entrepreneurs": the emergent subject of gendered research practices

Studies on women entrepreneurs are broadly divided among five thematic areas (Brush, 1992; Ahl, 2002; Monaci, 1997):

(1) the "breeding grounds" of female entrepreneurship;

(2) patterns of female entrepreneurship;

(3) the barriers against female entrepreneurship;

(4) the motivations of women entrepreneurs; and

(5) the organizational and managerial methods – the "enterprise culture" – of women entrepreneurs.

We now investigate how implicit assumptions on gender relations have steered research and the production of scientific knowledge. In examining each of the above five areas, we first set out the arguments adduced in support of the diversity of female entrepreneurship. We then deconstruct these arguments to show that the rhetorics used to explain diversities support a process of "othering".

The "breeding grounds" of women's entrepreneurship

The business economics literature reports that the great majority of women entrepreneurs are not only concentrated in the tertiary sector (commerce and especially services) but also began work in that sector, the traditional area of dependent female employment. At least three arguments have been mobilized in explanation of the tendency for women to create new businesses mainly in services:

(1) it is the sector of which they have most knowledge and experience;

(2) women frequently lack specific technical skills and this tends to dissuade them from starting businesses in the manufacturing and high-tech sectors, and also reduces their likelihood of surviving in those sectors; and

(3) the difficulty encountered by women in obtaining financial resources induces them to choose low capital-intensive activities, like those in the services sector.

This description reflects a state of affairs evinced by the statistics and by quantitative research (Rosa *et al.*, 1994). It is therefore socially regarded as reasonable and plausible. But to what extent does the researcher's understanding of gender relationships shape the way research is done and explanations are offered?

In the first instance women entrepreneurs are represented as located in ghettos within entrepreneurship, notably in more backward sectors where skills are an extension of what has been naturally learnt through gender socialization; sectors that are easier to enter and which therefore have little value. Women entrepreneurs are "the

others" with respect to the humus on which the entrepreneurial character is rooted and with respect to the grounds – the sectors – in which it develops.

In a second instance female entrepreneurship is connoted with the devaluation implicitly associated with the "female" gender, and this devaluation is perpetuated in the prescriptive literature, which urges women entrepreneurs to assume the values of rational action: orientation to results, efficiency, control, competition. Thus the characters of entrepreneurial personality (Kets de Vries, 1977) are institutionalized as male and "superior", while female entrepreneurship is represented as the result of gender properties: its "weakness" is the "natural" expression of the weak sex as reflected in society and the economy. But what are the consequences of such a gender representation in academic knowledge? The disciplines that study organizations, management, or business economics have institutionalized as "objective and universal knowledge" the experiences of the "strong" entrepreneurship manifested by male entrepreneurs operating in market conditions different from those faced by female entrepreneurs. Thus, female entrepreneurs are "the other" in terms of which the male entrepreneur is defined, so that the academic disciplines represent experiences and points of view of only one part of the entrepreneurial phenomenon.

The feminist critique has for some time attacked the tendency of researchers who study women to use men as their standards of comparison (Calvert and Ramsey, 1992), to construct the experience of women as "other than" (Irigaray, 1974), and to ask "why aren't they like us, or how can they become like us?" (Nkomo, 1992, p. 496). Because the production of knowledge is based on gendered ideas, it maintains and reproduces a system of gender relations that renders masculinity invisible while giving corresponding visibility to "other" experiences; whether these are firms owned by women or by non-white, non-heterosexual entrepreneurs who do not compete in the market as the canons of the for-profit enterprise dictate.

Patterns of female entrepreneurship
Against the background of the trends just described, attempts have been made to draw up typologies of women entrepreneurs. If the best-known classifications are combined (Goffee and Scase, 1985; Cromie and Hayes, 1988; Monaci, 1997), it is possible to identify the following "ideal-typical" profiles of women entrepreneurs:

- the "aimless" young women who set up a business essentially as an alternative to unemployment;
- the "success-oriented" young women for whom entrepreneurship is not a more or less random or obligatory choice but a long-term career strategy;
- the "strongly success-oriented" women, usually without children, who view entrepreneurial activity as an opportunity for greater professional fulfilment or as a means to overcome the obstacles against career advancement encountered in the organizations for which they previously worked;
- the "dualists", often with substantial work experience, who must reconcile work and family responsibilities and are therefore looking for a solution which gives them flexibility;
- the "return workers", or women (usually low-skilled) who have quit their previous jobs to look after their families and are motivated by mainly economic

considerations or by a desire to create space for self-fulfilment outside the family sphere;

- the "traditionalists", or women with family backgrounds in which the owning and running of a business is a longstanding tradition; and

- the "radicals", or women motivated by a culture antagonist to conventional entrepreneurial values who set up initiatives intended to promote the interests of women in society.

When we take a critical stance on these explanations and look for the gender subtext inscribed in them, we find that the patterns of female entrepreneurship are depicted as reflecting women's private life-courses: interruptions, discontinuities in business, ways to plan their futures which do not distinguish between business plans and personal plans. This representation highlights implicit gendering processes in two ways: by drawing a boundary between the public and private (assuming different logics of action in each domain and splitting the woman's life in two non-communicating domains), and by naturalizing women through their representation only in relation to the reproductive life-cycle. Indeed, if entrepreneurial activity belongs to the symbolic universe of the public, any signs of the private must be expunged. Male entrepreneurs are located in a space of representation in which business is rational action in a public arena, and their "private" features are made invisible so that they do not interfere with the entrepreneurial project. On the other side, patterns of female entrepreneurship are represented in a social space lying at the intersection between the reproductive life-cycle (childlessness, child-bearing, the empty nest, extended motherhood) and the entrepreneurial project. Can aimless, dualist; "return", traditional female entrepreneurs, inspire confidence in the business world? The implicit sub-text at work in this representation states that family duties take priority in women's lives, and therefore that women are not trustworthy entrepreneurs. At work in this representation is the implicit assumption that reproduction (and extended familial care) is a mainly female responsibility that should predominate over other responsibilities.

The barriers against female entrepreneurship
Studies conducted in the majority of the Western countries identify three main types of barrier against female entrepreneurship. First, the socio-cultural status of women, which identifies the primary role of women with family and domestic responsibilities and reduces the credibility of women intent on setting up businesses in a variety of ways. Then, the access to networks of information and assistance, which are often the main source of information and contacts, but which equally often comprise more or less overt mechanisms of gender exclusion (Aldrich *et al.*, 1989). Finally, access to capital; whether women entrepreneurs apply to an institutional financier (a bank, a finance agency), a friend, a relative or even her spouse, they are likely to come up against the assumption that "women can't handle money".

Deconstructing the gender assumptions implicit in the mainstream entrepreneurial literature finds an ally in research on minority-owned firms. The literature on these firms has shown that the presumption of their failure is due to psychological or racial non-conformity, not with discriminatory behaviour consequent on prejudices and stereotypes (Chotigeat *et al.*, 1991; Butler, 1991; Feagin, 1987). These studies describe a "discrimination-in-lending" due to prejudices and stereotypes, although the argument

usually adduced in defence of this explanation is that such businesses are economically less viable. Of interest is Thompson's (1989) explanation for the persistence of the prejudice, namely that it springs from acceptance of the neoclassical view of a capitalist economy and its individualistic assumption. People who fail are individually responsible for their choices, or they do not possess the appropriate character traits. The arguments concerning the barriers against female entrepreneurship has contributed to the social reproduction of a gender subtext, which represents women as "lacking in" status, networks and credibility. In turn this representation structures social perceptions of institutional actors and shapes their discriminatory, often unintentional, behaviour. The difficulties encountered by women entrepreneurs, not only in gaining access to credit (Fay and Williams, 1993; Riding and Swift, 1990), testify to the (and construct a) difficulty in gaining access to resources made available by society.

The motivations of women entrepreneurs
The dominant discourse regarding the reasons why women may decide to start up a business distinguishes between "compulsion" factors (which constrain women more out of necessity than choice) and positive or "attraction" factors (which induce women to see entrepreneurship as an opportunity). Attraction is represented by motives such as those outlined in Monaci (1997), a way to supplement an inadequate household income; or as a solution for entering in an activity in which formal selection criteria (qualifications, experience and gender) seem less stringent; as well as a strategy to obtain greater margins of flexibility and discretion. On the other side, compulsion is depicted as a search for independence and autonomy in work; a search for professional self-fulfilment; a search for income; the pursuit of a social mission (e.g. the social integration of the more vulnerable members of society).

In general, the entry of women into entrepreneurship seems to be a complex mix of constraints and opportunities, of external coercions and subjective aspirations. Yet, seen in deconstructive light, the interweaving of availability for the market and for the family which places adult women with family responsibilities in two systems (that are in fact interdependent though symbolically separate) is a normative model that produces drudgery, coercion, restrictions of time and cleavages of identity. At the same time those women able to cope with these constraints are represented as skilled in the management of flexibility and relational resources. The discontinuity between the two spheres of everyday existence – with the proliferation of loci of identity, and the endeavour to combine so many elements (times, relational styles, etc.) – is depicted as an identity resource for female entrepreneurs because it gives rise to opportunities and the ability to develop specific organizational, relational and institutional skills (Kolb and Meyerson, 1999).

The mainstream entrepreneurial literature, though seeking to understand how women are able to cope with conflicting demands, represents the female as a resource for the market economy, given the ability of women to survive in a hostile environment (and due to their valuable naturalised female skills). It first depicts ghettos for female entrepreneurship and then cites women' personality traits or economic inefficiency in explanation of why they remain in those ghettos. The joint effects of the institutional, historical and cultural factors that have confined women's choices to a narrow range of spaces are silenced. And finally, in explaining the phenomenon, the mainstream

discourse "discovers" the female abilities which make other economic strategies possible within those spaces and which justify the existence of niches. This discourse has constructed the female as a resource in a limited capacity, but it has not discarded the categories of the gender hierarchy. As a result, the success of women entrepreneurs may be used to discipline less efficient forms of entrepreneurship, and the international division of labour reflects the gender structuring whereby men dominate the global scenario, leaving the domestic economy for women to deal with (Calás and Smircich, 1993).

The enterprise culture of women entrepreneurs
The mainstream business economics literature tells us that firms set up and run by women tend to display a set of distinctive features (Brush, 1992; Chaganti, 1986). During the start-up and developments phases of their businesses, it seems that women tend not to use a deliberate approach; that is, a management model characterized by a distinct and rational sequence of actions (the identification of opportunities, the setting of objectives for corporate growth, the obtaining of resources, the production and marketing of goods/services, the articulation of a formally defined organizational structure). Moreover, whereas men are mainly characterized by a "transactional" style of leadership (involving the exchange of results for rewards and command through control), women display distinct abilities in "transformational" leadership: a management style which seeks to foster positive interactions and trust relations with/among subordinates, to share power and information and to encourage employees to subordinate their personal aims and interests to collective ends (Rosener, 1990).

A more critical interpretation (Kanter, 1977; David and Vicarelli, 1994) suggests that, because women have not usually been able to wield formal authority in the organizations for which they work, they have been forced to develop other strategies to that end, most notably an ability to "feel" and anticipate the reactions of others. For women entrepreneurs, therefore, their concern for relational aspects and the flexibility matured in so many supporting roles, as well as their everyday coordination of family and work responsibilities, is represented in business literature as a valuable organizational exploitable resource.

Female entrepreneurship is different because female entrepreneurs are women, and their socialization into gender models has produced values and behaviours that, though different, can nonetheless be evaluated. This discourse creates a social expectation of behaviour differences that bases itself on essentialist or culturalist assumptions and shapes a new normative model of female experiences. While the view of entrepreneurship as "gender-neutral" gave rise to a prescriptive literature which urged women to "masculinize" themselves, the discovery of a "good female" experience has produced a gendering programme which prescribes "femalization" at all costs.

Table I summarizes the main elements of the gender subtext underlying studies on women entrepreneurs in the business literature.

Conclusions: can we do it differently?
To study gender from a feminist post-structural positioning means to destabilise gender categories studying the social, material and discursive practices which categorize persons within a binary system, attributing them features of masculinity or femininity, and constructing symbolic systems, which are defined by difference. One of

Thematic areas	Explanations offered	Gender subtext
Breeding grounds: services	i) It is the sector of which they have most knowledge and experience ii) Women frequently lack specific technical skills iii) The greater difficulty encountered in obtaining financial resources induces them to choose low capital-intensive activities	i) Female entrepreneurs as constructing ghettos within entrepreneurship ii) Skills are an extension of what has been naturally learnt through gender socialization iii) Sectors easier to enter and which therefore have little value
Patterns of female entrepreneurship	a) The "aimless" young woman b) The "success-oriented" young woman c) The "strongly success-oriented" woman d) The "dualist" e) The "return worker" f) The "traditionalist" g) The "radical"	Patterns of female entrepreneurship are depicted as reflecting the reproductive life-cycle: interruptions, discontinuities in the business field, ways to plan the future which do not distinguish between business plans and personal plans. The "radicals" are the only exception
The barriers against female entrepreneurship	i) The socio-cultural status of women ii) Access to information and assistance iii) Access to capital	Women as "lacking" in: i) Status ii) Networks iii) Credibility
The motivations of women entrepreneurs	The entry of women into entrepreneurship seems to be a complex mix of constraints and opportunities, of external coercions and subjective aspirations	This discourse has constructed the female as a resource, and "discovers" the female abilities, which make other economic strategies possible within those spaces, justifying the existence of niches
The enterprise culture of women entrepreneurs	Firms set up and run by women tend: a) To have informal structures of work organization and coordination styles based largely on affective involvement of employees b) To assess their performance in terms of intrinsic criteria, rather than extrinsic ones of an economic nature c) To adopt an evolutionary approach to business development and to follow a "transformational" leadership	The view of entrepreneurship as "gender-neutral" gave rise to a prescriptive literature, which urged women to "masculinize" themselves; the discovery of "good female" experience has produced a gendering programme which prescribes "femalization" at all costs

Table I.
A deconstructive gaze at business economics literature on women entrepreneurs

the principal social processes of gender construction consists in the discursive practices that create everyday interactions and shape what is deemed to be knowledge and transmitted as expertise and science. Therefore, if gender is a historical and situated social practice, then it can be "done" (theorized, practiced, narrated) differently, since gender is the effect of "technologies of gender" (De Lauretis, 1987). We settle gender relations amongst the subject positions available to us and produced by existing discourses; but discourses are historically and temporally located, hence there are ground to represent other ways of being, thinking and doing beyond restrictive gender dualisms. Foucault (1982, p. 46) calls *assujetissement* (subjectification) the process by which we come to know about ourselves and to structure the field of our

possibilities: there are limitless ways of subject formation, of knowing, and of producing knowledge.

The constitution of subjects takes place through a dynamic of recognition, a process of identifying with and recognizing oneself in a particular discourse. An enterpreneur mentality discourse works by interpelleting women entrepreneurs (Althusser's (1971, p. 174) "Hey, you there!") and in so doing constituting them as subjects. Therefore, it represents a discursive space in which the subjectification of women entrepreneurs is formed. In the discourse on entrepreneurship the concept of entrepreneurship seems to be discriminatory in its, gender-bias, ethnocentric determinism and ideological imposition.

The claim made by a body of knowledge – entrepreneurship studies – that it is "gender-neutral" is however constructed in a context of instability and change in hegemonic masculinity making the latter model of economic rationality, theorized when studies on entrepreneurship became institutionalised, ill-suited to today's requirements (Bruni *et al.*, 2000). In contrast, the programme of research, which examines the gendering of studies on entrepreneurship, has produced a system of representations in which the female is presented as a resource and an advantage for the economy. The consequence of this shift is that Schumpeterian masculinity hampers the globalization of the economy, and the new resource of the female is used to discipline an obsolete model of masculinity.

A knowledge system constructed on implicitly reductionist gender assumptions thus becomes an instrument of dominance because it is used to draw boundaries among categories of persons, to exercise control over resources, and to devise support policies, for a category of persons labelled as second-sex entrepreneurs. The social construction of the female as the second sex generates "second-sexing" processes (Gherardi, 1995) as devaluing the female legitimates the withholding of valuable resources. As a discursive practice, the entrepreneur-mentality construct produces its own subject as *entrepreneur* and not *entrepreneuse*.

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Powerful discourses for social service

A feminist poststructural and action inquiry

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Abstract *Describes an action research project in a church affiliated, community-based social service organisation in Aotearoa, New Zealand, in which feminist and poststructural discourse theory is drawn on to examine collaboratively the discourses available and impinging upon the work of staff developing a residential service for women and children. Managerial, psychology and human rights discourses dominated the possibilities for the work. Some staff chose to resist these by articulating and positioning themselves within social justice, communitarian and liberation theology discourses.*

In this paper we describe an action inquiry in Waikato Anglican Social Services (WASS), in which we (Karen as Director of WASS and Bev as a researcher) worked with a group of staff to reflect on and develop a new service for women and their children. WASS is a community based, not-for-profit organisation affiliated to the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand [1]. Feminist and poststructural discourse theory enabled the staff involved to articulate the dominant and resistant discourses available and emerging through the work, particularly those relating to the "transformation" of women's lives and the work of social service organisations.

Cross Rose Centre (CRC) was set up as a new service because there were women, many with children, in the city who were homeless or needing assistance. It also came out of an imperative for social justice work within WASS, embedded within the organisational mission of "justice through service". Many women came to CRC with background experiences of poverty, drug, alcohol or gambling addictions, prostitution, mental illness, sexual abuse, domestic violence, and care and protection issues regarding their children. The vision was for a place in which women's lives might be transformed, through "building community in a new way".

The research as an action inquiry

We describe the research as an action inquiry because it involved working with a group of staff in a participatory way, to reflect on and take action in developing CRC through its first years. Action research is increasingly used in social service settings, because it combines an imperative for social change, ideals of empowerment through democratic participation, a challenge to the theory/practice divide, and a commitment to reflection and action: all commitments that reverberate in the language of social service (Hart and Bond, 1995). Action research has also been used in a variety of organisational contexts, often in relation to managing change or organisational

development (Reason and Bradbury, 2001). We came to see action research as a discourse with similar risks and possibilities for contributing to social justice, to the discourses of empowerment and transformation circulating through social service work.

Taking a discourse and feminist approach

We also describe the research as drawing on Foucault's idea of discourses and feminist poststructural theory in relation to the construction of gender, subjectivity and reflexivity. Taking a discourse approach within an action inquiry raised a number of questions about the relationships between reflection, reflexivity and subjectivity (Gatenby, 2003). Adopting a feminist poststructural discourse facilitated an examination of the power and authority effects of the action research discourse.

Foucault (1972, 1977) defines discourses as identifiable sets of utterances and practices, governed by rules of construction and evaluation, and determining what may be said and done, by whom and in what context. Discourses provide what we know as the truths of our time, though the process itself of truth making is often hidden, so that what we know as truth seems inevitable, natural, common sense, unchangeable or immutable (Weedon, 1997). In any setting, there are a number, if not many discourses, available and operating in complex multifaceted ways. As we go about the practical realities of our lives, we enter into discourses, though we experience this as unremarkable (Miller, 1997). Foucault (1977, 1980, 1981) describes power in a similar manner, as exercised, as moving though the activities that constitute our everyday lives. Power is embedded in sets of knowledge which themselves appear neutral, yet are used to regulate, constrain and discipline the conduct of others.

The power of discursive practices lies in providing certain subject positions (Davies and Harre, 1990), including positions privileged through their construction of and claim to various professions. However, although related to the discourses produced, subjects are multiple and dynamic. Foucault (1980, 1994) uses the word "subject" to refer to being "subject to" someone or something else, and to refer to the sense of being tied to our own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Individuals are both "subject to" and "subjects of" discourses.

Moreover, Foucault (1980, 1981) discussed the ways power is undermined, altered and resisted at every point. Discourses always contain within them the possibility of resistance. Following Foucault, other theorists have critiqued modernist ideas of resistance, commenting that the techniques and effects of power and resistance are likely to be more complex than any simple binary and must be examined in particular instances, identifying their specific means in specific contexts (Jermier *et al.*, 1994). Knights and Vurdubakis (1994) note that resistance can be the means by which power is re-authorised and dominant discourses reconstituted. Yet people find ways to resist dominant discourses and develop their own discourses of resistance:

> Dominant discourses are totalizing only for those who view them as such; they are replete with fissures and uncolonized spaces within which people engage in highly satisfying and even resistant practices of knowledge-making (Miller and Glassner, 1997, p. 100).

Resistant discourses can at least provide space from which individuals can challenge dominant subject positions. As Fairclough (1985) points out, critiques of discourses do not occur just in academic texts, but in all the everyday practices of subjects.

Foucault (1991) suggests the dominant discourses of liberalism are the most influential current rationalities. These discourses are distinguished by an emphasis on individual liberty and rights, and governance through a limited form of economic reasoning. They are used to govern through a modernist form of Enlightenment, said to be based on morally and intellectually validated sets of knowledge and practices of social improvement, therapy and order, all of which operate through identifying and attempting to correct various deviations from certain norms. Foucault was skeptical about the efficacy of this Enlightenment version of liberal humanism as a philosophy of freedom (Sawicki, 1994). More recently critical theorists have used the term "neoliberalism" to describe current forms of liberal social and economic policy (see, for example, Garland, 2001), also critiqued by Foucault in a number of his later works (Gordon, 2000).

Although some feminist theorists have criticised Foucault's work for its lack of attention to the gendering of subjectivity, others have identified synergies between Foucault's work and poststructural feminism. Sawicki (1994) comments on overlaps between Foucault's analysis of disciplinary forms of power exercised outside the politics of the modern liberal state and feminist insights about the politics of personal life; between Foucault's emphasis on the sexual body as the target and vehicle of power/knowledge and feminist analysis of patriarchal control over women's minds and bodies through the sciences of medicine, social work and psychology; and between Foucault's critique of Enlightenment humanism based on an apparently autonomous subject and knowledge, and feminist challenges to fundamental epistemological and political assumptions in modern Western thought. Other feminist theorists, most notably Butler (1990), have used postmodern and poststructural theory to elaborate on the ways in which gender is performed, constructed and enacted through myriad of daily interactions and activities.

Applying feminist poststructural theory in the action research described here provided a means for thinking about the possibilities and difficulties of both transformation in the lives of the women in CRC, and in the organisation of the work. Poststructural critiques of action research discourse are now emerging, as in the work of Lennie *et al.* (2003) and Treleaven (2001), both of whom invoke action research and poststructural feminism in their research with women. Using action research discourses provided a way of making feminist and poststructural theory part of everyday conversation in the organisation thus enabling radical local change in the organisation.

An emerging research aim and process: a practical application of discourse theory

A significant part of the inquiry came to be about understanding what discourses were available or governed the work of CRC, and the material effects of those discourses. The notions of discourse, power, knowledge, subjectivity and resistance were used to reflect on the work of the Agency.

I (Bev) began initially by trying to encourage reflection among staff about the construction of meaning in the work of CRC and the power they exercised through their relationships with women in CRC. I felt frustrated by frequent truth-making comments such as "that's just the way it is", "the truth is that these women . . .", "the reality is . . ." and "that's human nature. . ." which often positioned the women in CRC in ways which

limited the possibilities of change in the women's lives, often by continuing to construct them as abusive or neglectful mothers, dangerous, damaged or flawed.

In response, we developed a workshop for staff in which we introduced at a practical level the idea of discourses. We hoped staff members might begin to discuss the discourses dominant in their work, the power effects, and the possibilities for resistance, or at least, understand that there were other ways of reading the world, the work of CRC, and the women who lived there. Weedon's (1997) delineation of the effects of discourses was useful in the workshop:

A given discourse regulates:

(1) what is known and what can be known;

(2) what is done and said and what can be done and said;

(3) our sense of self, and the particular identities that takes the form of; and

(4) the power issues that permeate all of these.

I (Bev) used the example of Western medicine as a particular discourse along with a number of resistant discourses and most staff engaged actively with this example. When it came to discussing the dominant discourses operating in CRC, the discussion was more difficult. For some, such an analysis appeared to challenge their sense of who they were, their professional roles, and the truths upon which they based their work. However for some staff the workshop made it possible to discuss the discourses surrounding CRC and the women who lived there, and to frame the work as resistance to some dominant discourses. For Karen and I, many of our conversations throughout the inquiry were about the subject positions we occupied as director and researcher in the organisation, and the power we exercised (or were not able to exercise) through those positions and our friendship, which both privileged the action inquiry discourse and held open a space for deep reflexivity.

Social service work for women: available, imposed and resisted discourses
Six key questions served as an informal basis for conversations, group meetings and workshops though which the action inquiry continued to develop:

(1) What discourses are available in this place at this time?

(2) Which discourses are dominant in this place at this time?

(3) What subject positions are available (or not available) to women in CRC?

(4) What subject positions are available (or not available) to staff?

(5) Who has the power to know about the women in CRC?

(6) What are the techniques of power operating?

We began to talk of several key liberal (or neoliberal) discourses at this time, which provided the conditions for social service work with women and children, in a church-affiliated, community-based, social service organisation in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Several related liberal discourses, specifically discourses of individualism, managerialism, psychology, and health, were powerful in the social services sector. We believed they limited the subject positions available to the women who lived at CRC and the staff who worked with them, and therefore limited the possibilities for transformation. Even the apparent need for transformation can be read as coming out

of these discourses. In contrast, some staff members developed further their articulation of, and intent to draw from discourses of biculturalism, community as relationship, communion and connection, radical Christian theology, and social justice.

To illustrate the kind of analysis possible, we have chosen to write a narrative of one small event and to examine the ways such an event can be read, the subject positions made available, and the ways power operated through interactions between staff and women who lived at CRC. A number of readings are presented, though these are not the only possibilities and there are many intersections and contradictions both within and between the discourses available. No matter how much we write in this paper, it is impossible to cover the complexities of just this one small event. Each reading is an example of particular discursive threads, which emerged in the weekly meeting of all staff involved in CRC. Part of these regular meetings involved a period of reflexivity regarding the discourses staff members drew on when discussing events of each week. We present these readings not as indications that the discourses in which they are embedded are inherently bad, but to show the kinds of assumptions underlying each, the provision of certain subject positions, and the limitations of each. In all cases, the discourses also sometimes provided opportunities for transformation. We discuss the subject positions available for both the women who lived in CRC and the staff, because the two are closely intertwined as power relations.

Four eggs and two coffees for breakfast on Thursday
On Thursday, Carly, one of the women living at CRC with her two children, woke, showered, dressed, helped the children get dressed, checked they had breakfast, made their school lunches and waved goodbye to them as the Cross Rose van took them off to school.

Then she went into the kitchen, fried four eggs, piled them on four pieces of toast, made herself a strong black coffee, sat down and ate her breakfast. Then she made herself another coffee, and drank that.

1. From within psychological and therapeutic discourses
Women at CRC drink too much coffee and eat too much food. They use coffee as a sedative instead of dealing with their real troubles. They need more counselling so they can resolve their emotional issues. The women in CRC need to learn to demonstrate self-discipline and limit themselves to three cups of coffee a day.

Carly tends to show a lack of self-discipline and often treats herself to extra food. This is an indication of her psychological state. Specifically, Carly was raped as a ten year old by her uncle. When she told her mother about it two years later, her mother sent her away to boarding school. Consequently, Carly has trouble relating to men and her daughter, who is almost ten now. She needs intensive therapy with a skilled therapist to deal with her emotional trauma so she can form positive relationships and control her addictive and inappropriate behaviours.

Comments. Within these discourses, Carly is located primarily as a "case" or a "client" who is psychologically damaged and whose life is most likely to be transformed through therapeutic intervention. Women damaged psychologically in ways such as Carly is, are often positioned as mothers likely to parent inappropriately.

Social service work within this discourse is primarily individual counselling or psychological work. The positions occupied by staff are provided through the

necessity for experts who know the psychological causes of behaviours and can therefore provide appropriate therapeutic interventions. Power operates primarily through the right of counsellors and psychologists to "know" the psychological state of the women, the mechanisms of counselling, and through women themselves believing that their lives will only be good after appropriate counselling.

Resistance within this discourse can happen through engaging with issues of power/knowledge in the relationship between client and counsellor. Some of the women resisted psychopathological definitions of themselves, and any sense of requirement to be counselled, often by not turning up to appointments, refusing to be counselled by certain counsellors, or articulating their resistance to constructions of themselves as damaged.

In academic discourses of psychology, resistance has occurred primarily within deconstructive and narrative psychology. Parker (1999), for example, argues that psychological knowledge is presented as a set of neutral tools, to be used only by experts dispensing help for others, and as essential in defining problems for which psychologists then provide solutions. Noting the contribution of feminist theory, he argues for a critical concern, which is not about finding the correct standpoint, but understanding how we come to stand where we are. From this position, a concern with justice in therapy is intertwined with a concern for social justice in the world that has made therapy necessary (Waldegrave and Tamasese, 1993).

2. From within various management discourses

Coffee costs a great deal (actually so do eggs) and CRC cannot afford the cost of so much coffee, if staff are to manage the budget on the limited funding available. We need systems for managing the budget and evening out food consumption over the week.

Child, Youth and Family Services (CYFS) [2] only partially funds the operating costs of CRC which is a community organisation with limited resources. Staff are morally bound to manage those resources as efficiently as possible. The organisation is accountable to government and charitable funders for the effective use of those funds.

CYFS requires that CRC staff set three-monthly goals as part of our strategy with Carly, which at the next audit will be reviewed to see if she is making progress, as an indicator that staff are achieving the outcomes required in our contract. Carly's effective management of herself will demonstrate our effective management of the women, the Centre and the budget.

Comments. This discourse positions the women as recipients of effective management and as clients or customers of services that cost money. Transformation means learning to manage their lives and behaviour more effectively, to manage their children, and to manage grief and trauma. Managing CRC effectively ensures the service is developed objectively and rationally with the most cost-effective outcomes. Staff are positioned as managers of the clients/customers and resources, and as being managed themselves through the hierarchy of managers in the organisation.

In managerialist discourses, techniques of strategic management are presented as a neutral set of knowledge and practices arising out of the right to control according to apparently rational and objective principles and truths (Knights, 1992; Kaboolian, 1998). Managerialism also occurs through viewing the identity, health and well-being

of people as both a psychological principle and a managerial principle of efficiency. The "science" of psychiatry was moved through psychology, and human resource management, to organisations as a means of "managing effectively" (Miller and Rose, 2001). Management is conceived as a generic practice perfected by the private sector (Kaboolian, 1998). Through reforms of the public service in the 1980s and 1990s, managerial principles became the mode of operation of power in the public sector Boston *et al.*, 1996 and then were transferred via managerial contractual power to the community sector, particularly in social service organisations reliant on government funding to provide services previously provided by government (Deakin, 2001).

In CRC, a number of intersections between discourses of psychology and managerialism emerged. Contracting with CYFS to provide social service involved being required to both "manage" appropriately and to provide psychological and managerial interventions, particularly when that same government agency had statutory powers regarding the care and custody of children. On the other hand, managerial techniques regarding the employment of staff were also sometimes useful in resisting the power of psychologists and counsellors to "know" the women in CRC. Staff in CRC sometimes chose to resist the language of outputs and outcomes of service provision, by, for example, refusing to call women "customers" or "clients".

3. From within liberal feminist and human rights discourses

Carly chose to come to CRC to change her life. Like other women in CRC, she needs to be empowered to make the right choices for her well-being and that of her children. Women like Carly have not had the same access as others in our society to education and employment.

Staff in CRC treat all women as equals and can empower other women. Taking care of the human rights of Carly and each of her children will provide the basis for their well-being. All people are equal but the safety of children is paramount.

Comments. Within these discourses, access to education and employment are assumed to provide the means for transforming women's lives. Within some versions the women in CRC are positioned as competitors in a market, which given the right circumstances and uptake of opportunities will provide fair and equitable outcomes for them. Conversely, if the women do not make the "right choices" they are likely to be positioned as irrational or inadequate. For example, a woman "choosing" not to take up paid work or further education because she wished to be the primary carer for her children risked being constructed as lazy, irresponsible or stupid, despite the messages given to women, particularly those parenting alone, to prioritise the care of their children.

In several academic fields difficulties with the language of empowerment have been discussed, including critical psychology (Parker, 1999), radical social work (Pease and Fook, 1999) and poststructural feminist research (Ristock and Pennell, 1996). Empowerment often implies handing over power from one to another, yet being the one to do the handing over and the defining of who is powerless, is in itself a power relation. Ironically, the language of empowerment hides the power relation. The discourse in this context positions the women in CRC as powerless and the staff as powerful though egalitarian.

Human rights approaches to justice tend to construct individuals as the point for assessing just outcomes. Liberal feminism and human rights perspectives rely on the

idea that people are autonomous, rational, self-determining beings. Those who critique these discourses argue they artificially abstract people from their physical bodies and their social relationships and fail to account for caring relationships and the dependency of human life (Bryson, 1999).

The language of human rights was often useful in arguing for different outcomes for women in CRC, particularly when staff positioned themselves as social advocates for the women, or in resisting managerialism. However, we also noted that human rights and liberal feminist discourses, which focus on outcomes for individuals, were of limited value for work that valued the building of connections and relationships between people.

More significant moments and events

The event described above is but one small story. Many other events were more significant and could equally be read in a number of ways with important effects on the possibilities for the women and children in CRC. We could have told stories about the removal of a child from a mother, or the placement of a woman in psychiatric care.

A number of these significant events or interactions were related to the care and protection of children. Although the early language of staff in CRC highlighted their vision of a place which women would "choose" to come to, and where they would be "empowered" to make better choices in their lives, it soon became clear that many women came into CRC because they would lose custody of their children if they did not do so, or because they wished to regain custody of their children. Notions of choice and empowerment thus became problematised within the organisation, as empowerment, transformation, participation and reflexivity were problematised within the discourses of action research and poststructural theory.

We noted the power court-appointed psychologists had to decide if a mother should be able to care for her children. In court cases relating to care and custody, it was not uncommon for a psychologist to observe a mother with her children for a few hours to assess her mothering as the basis for a court decision. Yet the reports of staff in CRC based on several months of observation and involvement counted for considerably less. Other key events occurred around mental health of women. We recognised the power of discourses of mental health/illness. Although recent research in Aotearoa, New Zealand problematises psychiatric intervention as the route to recovery from psychiatrically defined mental illness (Lapsley and Nikora, 2002), choosing to resist the discourse was difficult for staff within a social service organisation. While we could deconstruct psychopathology and mental illness, it was far more difficult not to refer for psychiatric intervention a woman whose behaviour could be read as suicidal, or schizophrenic. In many situations, staff members were required to demonstrate their effective management and reduction of risk of mental illness. Points of resistance needed always to be chosen carefully.

Choosing (sometimes) to resist and choosing alternatives

The discourses described above, and others, operated in complex intersecting ways for the women and work of CRC. Through the action inquiry, some staff became more aware of the discourses they and the women in CRC were positioned in and positioned themselves in. Some became aware that the kind of event described above could be read in several ways, that we choose what "knowledge" about other people we

foreground, and that that makes available different subject positions and hence different possibilities in people's lives.

For example, a Maori staff member, remembering her own upbringing in what she notes is now called poverty, commented on the sign of well-being which having several eggs for lunch represented in her family. She read the event as a sign of well-being for women in CRC, and those discourses used to discipline such actions as arising out of class and Pakeha domination, particularly since Pakeha women seem to be so obsessed with being slim. In such a reading she resisted positions of inadequacy for herself and the women in CRC.

Another staff member could read Carly's care for her children before making her own breakfast as an indication of her effective mothering, positioning Carly as an able and caring mother. Sitting down to eat breakfast could be read as an example of the provision of abundance, in resistance to poverty, by CRC. Managing is not about reducing economic inputs in this reading, but about providing plenty. Perhaps, Carly sat down to breakfast with a group of other women in CRC, in a time of sharing food and talk which contributed to building relationships and therefore a sense of community among the women, which might contribute to their well-being. Within these points of resistance, the work of the staff is considerably different than the work of empowerment through effective management and therapy. Taking a poststructural approach to the construction of gender, in this case particularly the construction of certain kinds of womanhood and motherhood enabled some staff to ask what was being constructed in relation to gender in this organisation.

The action inquiry began to focus on articulating resistance and framing alternatives to the dominant discourses. Some staff, with Karen, chose to work in this way. The mission of the organisation, "justice through service", combined notions of social justice and Christian service, both of which prioritised relationships rather than individuals. Liberation and feminist theology provided views of the Christian gospel as primarily about social justice and the possibility of alternative economic and social systems. The work of CRC had been developed publicly as primarily secular, since discourses about Pakeha social services, located staff associated with church-affiliated agencies as having to prove they were not proselytising, nor "do-gooding", nor racist. When the women in CRC asked why there was no "church" at the Centre, which they had expected and wanted, informal community based services were offered for those wishing to be involved. Staff members became more articulate about the Centre also being a place for spiritual exploration for them and the women in CRC. Paradoxically, given critiques of Christianity as colonising, discourses of de-colonisation and biculturalism enabled Maori women living in CRC to claim their Christian spirituality.

Resistance to current forms of liberal individualism, for both staff members and women in CRC, was articulated through locating transformation and well-being as existing in and through relationship, conversation, connection and communion with others and through building community, rather than through expert interventions with individuals. A number of theorists have articulated communitarian approaches to justice, and in resistance to liberalism (Taylor, 1998), arguing for invoking people as socially constituted and seeking mutuality in relationships (Barber, 1984). The work of staff shifted from individual counselling to social advocacy and consciousness-raising. Opportunities were provided to explore ways staff members might draw on discourses of biculturalism in their work. Other researchers and social activists joined the work.

The discourse of resistance for working with women in CRC was paralleled by alternative ways of viewing the organising of the agency. The work of the Director also included articulating discourses of resistance. The workplace became known as a place where staff could explore their spirituality, singly or together. It also became known as a community, and the work of the staff was to be "in community" with the women and children who lived in CRC. Of course, this was not always comfortable as resistance has its own dangers and power effects. A few staff members chose to leave, in a sense resisting the critique of their expert positions within managerialist and psychological discourses, which had emerged through the action inquiry. This outcome further problematised the notions of empowerment, transformation and participation that feature in action research writing (Reason and Bradbury, 2001) and the assumed moral value of reflexivity in poststructural theory. The action inquiry and poststructural reflexivity had complex, multifaceted, intended and unintended consequences.

In 2002, Waikato Anglican Social Services was renamed Anglican Action. The re-naming drew on both the "action" of action research and the "action" of choosing to work from discourses which enabled critiques of social structures and their relationship to poverty and hardship, rather than discourses which located explanations for poverty in inadequate individuals.

Some concluding remarks

The action inquiry presented here is specific to one organisation at one time in one place. However, it may also be important to reflect on the dominant discourses in social services across Aotearoa, New Zealand. Through the relationship between government agencies and community-based social services, power is exercised within the discourses of managerialism, psychology, and human rights. Although the current Labour government has tempered the neoliberal economics of past decades, many of the systems of liberal individualism remain in operation as apparently neutral sets of knowledge about the nature of people and of organising. In this context, people in community-based social services often do claim various places of resistance, at the same time as they are drawn into the discourses.

The action inquiry focus on reflection and transformation, and the feminist poststructural focus on reflexivity and subjectivity, was combined in this research serving as a guide to encourage staff to be self-reflexive about their subjectivity within particular discourses, the subjectivity of the women they worked with and the power embedded in their relationships with women in CRC. Most staff became more self-conscious about their positions, their power relations and effects. Such reflexivity also enabled changes in the minute-by-minute work of the organisation, since an ongoing analysis of the discourses framing the work became part of the work. This inquiry thus provides an example of organisational change elicited through a local poststructural analysis with a focus on gendered subjectivity.

It seems important to say at this point that developing a discourse of resistance requires also a continuing reflexivity about that discourse, to understand the limitations and injustices which will also emerge through its use. This seems to us to be a commitment to hold all knowledge lightly, including knowledge about women's lives, social service, organisational change, action research and feminist poststructural theory.

Notes

1. I use Maori and the English names for our country to acknowledge both cultures and languages. Maori are the indigenous people of this country, which was colonised by waves of settlers, mostly from England, from the mid-1700s.

2. CYFS is the government department with statutory responsibilities for the care and protection of children. CYFS also contracts out funding for the provision of child and family services.

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Screwing diversity out of the workers? Reading diversity

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Abstract *"Managing diversity" has emerged as a new and contested vocabulary for addressing issues of difference in organisations. This paper uses a New Zealand case study to exemplify a feminist post-structuralist reading of managing diversity. The paper argues that a feminist post-structuralist approach not only addresses feminist theoretical debates about identity, equality and difference, but also opens up new opportunities for practitioners in managing diversity and equal employment opportunities (EEO) to reflect on their own organisational change practice. The paper presents three readings of managing diversity: a discourse of exploitation which provides oppositional readings of managing diversity as a form of human resource management; a discourse of difference, drawing on refusals of managing diversity in accounts from minority group perspectives; and a discourse of equality where EEO practitioners have questioned managing diversity in the context of EEO.*

Introduction

To talk about diversity and difference is to talk about the constantly shifting power relationships between the margins and the centre. In these relationships "the spectre of recuperation", as Gunew (1994, p. 87) calls it, is always present. To talk of "managing diversity" is to place this conversation in an organisational context. In talking of diversity we are talking of what occurs in organisational life, and we are also talking of the framework within which we represent organisational diversity in the writing of management academics and practitioners.

In the early 1990s, managing diversity was emerging as a new and contested vocabulary for addressing issues of difference – gender, ethnicity, culture, sexuality – in organisations. This paper uses a case study of this historical moment to exemplify a feminist post-structuralist reading of managing diversity. In doing so, I argue that this approach not only addresses feminist theoretical debates about identity, equality and difference, but also opens up new opportunities for practitioners in managing diversity and equal employment opportunities (EEO) to reflect on their own practice.

In the academic literature of the last decade, arguments over definitions of managing diversity have been intertwined with arguments over business and social objectives, and relationships between managing diversity and EEO (Liff, 1997, 1999; Nkomo and Cox, 1996; Sinclair, 2000; Thomas and Ely, 1996). One response has been to call for "conceptual clarity" to remedy the "confusion and ambiguity" in the field (Cox, 1994, p. 51), to replace it with new and unifying truths about what managing diversity really is. I take a different approach, arguing that vocabularies of difference will inevitably be unstable, and that this instability opens up possibilities for "de-naturalizing" difference. The kinds of difference that are at issue in talking about diversity or EEO – such as gender and ethnicity – are not natural phenomena that can be taken as given, but are represented differently in different discourses. They

have different power effects depending on where they place certain groups in a continuum between the margins and centres of organisations. This approach also contributes to what Cassell and Biswas (2000, p. 271) have identified as an emergent "more critical approach to managing diversity", and addresses "the lack of theoretical development in this area".

In this paper I present readings of managing diversity from three discursive contexts: a discourse of exploitation which provides oppositional readings of managing diversity as a form of human resource management; a discourse of difference, drawing on refusals of managing diversity in accounts from minority group perspectives; and a discourse of equality where EEO practitioners have questioned managing diversity in the context of EEO. The approach I take is not that there are better – clearer, more correct, more universally politically effective – readings of managing diversity, but that all have their dangers and possibilities in specific contexts and in terms of specific political programmes. I am primarily concerned with practitioners' readings of managing diversity in the specific contexts, rather than with the academic literature of managing diversity, although I do use the literature to create some context for my analysis. One of the points I want to make is that managing diversity, like other terms of difference, works in more contradictory and complex ways in practice than it does in the programmatic literature.

First, I briefly outline feminist debates on equality and difference and discuss how these relate to debates about managing diversity in organisations. I go on to introduce the case study, and my data collection method and analytical approach. The core of the paper is composed of three different readings of diversity, and I conclude by advocating feminist post-structuralist approaches as a way to imagine organisational change.

Feminist debates on equality and difference

The concept of "difference" is the key problematic of feminism. It is inseparably implicated in the concept of "identity" – sameness – that makes one group cohere, and makes it distinguishable from other groups. While feminist discourse centres on gender difference, feminist theorisations of difference also explicitly implicate other differences. In the EEO context these are, for instance, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and disability. Judith Butler has articulated the realisation of many feminists that "the premature insistence on a stable subject of feminism, understood as a seamless category of women, inevitably generates multiple refusals to accept the category" (Butler, 1990, p. 4). For women to work together – as in the coalitions that constitute EEO policies – the differences between women must be recognised, as well as their common interests in a given context. Working with "feminist politics/movements across time and space" has been a persistent concern of feminists, as they struggle to account for difference while seeking to build new identities and new dialogues (Ngai-Ling, 2000). Central to this concern have been the "equality/difference debates" (Scott, 1994), and the research presented here shows some ways that this debate relates to organisational practice.

In this paper I adopt what Butler calls a "denaturalizing critique", considering how diverse identities come to be constructed in ways that produce the effect of natural or essential categories. Like Butler, I follow Foucault's line that discourses are "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault, 1972, p. 49). Here I

speak from what Butler (1990, p. 110) calls a "self- consciously denaturalized position" from which to see "how the appearance of naturalness is constituted", and which political possibilities are opened up or constrained by various ways of framing identity. There is not space here to recapitulate the feminist debates on the politics of post-structuralism, or to background the feminist Foucauldian approach (see for instance Benhabib *et al.*, 1995). Instead, the emphasis of this paper is to show how some of the key concepts play out in a given organisational situation, where feminist practitioners set out to change the ways that difference is constructed. As Weedon (1987, p. 22) has suggested, feminist poststructuralism provides a place from which to question and analyse the assumptions of feminist political ideas and practices:

> Poststructuralism can ... indicate the types of discourse from which particular feminist questions come and locate them socially and institutionally. Most important of all, it can explain the implications for feminism of these other discourses.

In this paper I use examples to show how feminist approaches to organisational change are interwoven with discourses of exploitation, difference and equality, and to present some ideas about the effects of these relationships. In relation to this research, I position myself as a feminist who shares many of the political commitments and discursive biographies of the people I interviewed.

Methodology

It is important to the context of my readings of managing diversity to emphasise that the range of discursive positions that I set out here is derived from interviews with people who are explicitly committed to equality in organisations. This paper is based on a series of interviews I carried out in 1993-1994 with a range of people working in areas such as EEO units and cultural development units in the New Zealand public service, as well as some trade unionists, researchers, and other commentators on EEO. (Understandings of EEO and cultural development are explored in more details below.) My focus was on the construction and intersections of gender and ethnic difference. The intention was not to gather a representative sample of views in the scientific sense, but rather to create an account, which presents a discourse analysis of a range of voices articulating their positions on EEO. As critical discourse analyst Norman Fairclough has argued, discourse samples which focus on "moments of crisis " can problematise or de-naturalise discursive practice, spotlighting points of change or power struggle (Fairclough, 1992, p. 230). At the time I carried out these interviews, managing diversity was a term that was just beginning to be put into employment policy discourse in New Zealand, and its meanings and implications were being actively contested among those I spoke with.

It should be noted that I refer to managing diversity as a vocabulary, not a discourse. From a Foucauldian perspective, a lexical item (such as "managing diversity") is not in itself an indicator of a "discourse": rather, "a shared vocabulary " can be "[infused] with different political meanings " as a function of "the strategic mobility of racial discourses " (Stoler, 1995, p. 13). I take "managing diversity" as the "shared vocabulary ", and look at how it worked as it circulated in different discursive contexts.

The accounts I gathered were mainly from Pakeha women (over 90 per cent) reflecting their dominance in the local EEO community. ("Pakeha" refers to

non-indigenous New Zealanders, especially those of British or other European descent.) Most of these women took a feminist approach to EEO, and most had moved into EEO positions because of their political commitments. As feminists they were concerned that the political force of EEO would be overcome or assimilated in organisational processes, as well as being strongly sensitised to the need to build effective coalitions around EEO issues with other marginalised groups.

Discourses of exploitation

In my first reading I frame managing diversity within a discourse of exploitation. I start with my title: "Screwing diversity out of the workers?" This term was used by a trade unionist to describe the exploitation of minority cultural skills in organisations. In the New Zealand public service context, the assertion of indigenous rights by Maori has led to a policy of "biculturalism". In New Zealand this concept has been central since the 1980s in articulating the relationship between the indigenous Mäori (about 10 per cent of the working age population in the early 1990s) and the Pakeha majority (about 85 per cent). It was originally introduced in recognition of Maori cultural values and related political claims, and was particularly salient in government organisations at the time of the original research. This meant that various aspects of Maori culture – Maori language and protocol, for instance – were introduced at various sites in organisational life. Here one trade union speaker's describes bicultural practices in terms of "screwing diversity out of the workers":

> You know all that um, *dial-a-waiata* [traditional song], kind of *dial-a-mihi* [Maori welcome], um, dial-a-kaumatua [elder] stuff that they were doing to our members in their workplaces, and yet it wasn't a two way stree ... the reciprocity of recognising that very special contribution that Maori may have – the value of that to their organisation ... they weren't prepared to recognise that that skill was like the policy– writing skill or the mail – sorting skill or ... whatever skills that people brought to work and were remunerated for.

To talk of managing diversity in terms of "screwing diversity out of the workers" turns arguments in its favour upside down: it evokes the possibility that "managing diversity" is a vocabulary that forms a part of an exploitative discourse, which runs against the grain of workers' interests. The interests of workers and managers are placed in opposition, and diversity is presented as vulnerable to exploitation through being "managed".

The trade unionists that I interviewed agreed that the placement of managing diversity as an aspect of human resource management (HRM) tended to take it out of the domain of industrial relations – where, for instance, remuneration such as language allowances could be negotiated to recognise cultural skills – and into the domain of organisational strategy. EEO, on the other hand, was identified more strongly with a "bottom up" approached based on local networks of EEO groups and often included in collective workplace agreements. From a trade union perspective:

> Management have a narrower and different agenda ... ["Managing diversity"] just defines it really, really clearly as a management tool ... It's got nothing to do with those social equity issues, you know, that all staff should have, you know, those same chances in the workforce.

Both trade union and management perspectives on diversity speak of "exploiting" diversity, but each side sees this very differently. In the managerial account, the exploitation of diversity as an organisational resource is integrated seamlessly into a

strategic narrative in which the interests of the organisation and the workers are one. The rhetoric of "managing diversity" here claims a benefit to the bottom line: an opportunity to "capitalize on differences" (Carnevale and Stone, 1994, p. 32). "Making diversity pay" (Labich, 1996) usually revolves around two centres: first, in the "demographic realities of a changing labor force", managing diversity will mean "hav[ing] an edge in attracting the best talent", as well as "an easier time serving markets that are themselves multicultural". The "diversity imperative" is distinguished from what is usually presented as a moral argument: "making diversity pay" is positioned for instance, in contrast to what is somewhat derisively referred to as "some high-minded act of social conscience" (Labich, 1996).

Is the language of "managing diversity" therefore no more than the seductive veneer of an ultimately assimilationist capitalism, as Humphries and Grice (1995) have argued? In their critical analysis of the literature of diversity, they locate it within managerialist discourses of global capitalism. They oppose "an appearance of concern with fairness, equality of opportunity and empowerment" to "the economic argument underlying the discourse". Locating this "economic argument" within the logic of capitalism, 'managing diversity' is seen as a form of neo-racism, "an attempt to maintain as many vestiges of... past exclusion as possible" (Humphries and Grice, 1995, p. 22).

Like the trade union account, managerial accounts of diversity are re-framed by this argument, showing the political effects that are typically masked in descriptions of "best practice". Humphries and Grice (1995) argue that HRM discourse is inevitably exploitative. As a product of this discourse, managing diversity is seen as replacing the discursive space previously allocated to equality. By contrast, a post-structuralist account would reject the idea that there is a single "truth" that can be unmasked, because any single claim to truth inevitably marginalises other claims (as for instance white feminism does when it claim the "truth" about gender, and as do class-based explanations which exclude gender). While the analysis of power effects is still central, a post-structuralist approach is interested in how power plays out in a given situation, rather than resting on one grand narrative – such as that of capitalism – to universally explain all political effects. Reducing managing diversity to exploitation discounts the agency and effectiveness of marginalised groups in introducing diversity issues into organisational language. For instance, in the New Zealand private sector situation, where HRM tends not to be highly professionalised, there is a situation of what Nkomo and Cox (1996, p. 343) call "unmanaged diversity". In such a situation there is little or no explicit employment policy of any kind, certainly no policy of EEO or of managing diversity and no discursive opening for discussing equality except where legislation covers areas such as discrimination and sexual harassment. In this context HRM discourse can provide a new opening for discussing the management of diversity.

I argue for an analysis of managing diversity in which the specific positionings of both minority groups and change agents are considered when evaluating the power effects of diversity discourse – acknowledging the potential both for negative exploitation and also for political gains for the exploited. In a study of the implications of HRM discourse for trade unions, Austrin (1994) has proposed that HRM provides new "contexts of talk" in which new speaking positions are created. He sees these new contexts as an opportunity for unions, enabling "new strategies of both managerial discipline and union resistance" (Austrin, 1994, p. 268). From a post-structuralist

perspective, no given discursive formation has a predictable or universal political effect, as Foucault puts it:

> It is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together. And for this very reason, we must conceive discourse as a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable ... we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between ... the dominant discourse and the dominated one' (cited in Eribon, 1991, p. 100).

Discourses of difference

Unquestioned assumptions about the nature of difference are often common to the capitalist and anti-capitalist discourses of exploitation. As Nkomo and Cox (1996, p. 339) point out, to discuss diversity is to discuss "the very meaning of identity and its treatment in the study of organizations", and this identity is at times framed in terms of individuals, at others in terms of groups (Liff, 1997; Nkomo, 1998). Managing diversity is often framed as the de-regulation of difference, allowing "natural" abilities – whether ascribed to groups or individuals – to flourish (Sauers, 1993). This framing masks the rules by which identities are constructed in social processes – such as EEO and diversity programmes – by presenting them as biologically essentialised.

The political work of feminist post-structuralism focuses on the processes by which identities are produced, maintained, and contested. Identity is not taken as pre-given, but can be challenged or interrupted. Structural analyses of power based on pre-given identities are regarded as only one possible narrative of difference. The question of diversity then becomes: what are the identities created in a discourse of managing diversity in a given setting, and what are their political effects?

For instance, the language of managing diversity does not apply universally regardless of location. A number of practitioners that I talked with specifically related managing diversity to an American model, which had been brought into New Zealand by consultants. They questioned the appropriateness of a US model of identity for the local situation. This is how one EEO practitioner put it:

> It means different things in different countries and I think that we have got to be very careful that we don't ... bring in what is basically an American model and try and plant it in New Zealand. Even when we talk about it we've got to be very clear what we are talking about because we are not necessarily talking about the same thing ...What managing diversity [is] doing is now starting to address some of the gaps that were left in the American approach. Now if we look at what has happened in New Zealand... I think we had from the start taken much more of an environmental, cultural perspective in EEO than has occurred in the States. So I don't think that we have necessarily the same gap, I don't think we have necessarily the same issues. I think we've got to be careful.

This Americanisation of diversity is also threaded through the academic literature on managing diversity (see Jones *et al.*, 2000).

Similarly, discourses of equality such as EEO proceed from other specific western models of equality and difference, and are historically related to the United Kingdom and other countries with British connections, such as New Zealand, Australia and Canada. In EEO frameworks, EEO groups are seen as facing certain types of structural discrimination, and are yoked together in a kind of equivalence of difference. In comparison, the concept of managing diversity typically reduces difference to a level where "the idea is to treat people as individuals, recognising that each employee has

different needs" (Sauers, 1993, p. 46). Neither of these two variations on western concepts of difference makes space for a Maori approach in which tangata whenua (indigenous) status, stated politically in terms of the national Treaty of Waitangi, is primary. To the extent that the concept of managing diversity reduces all difference to demographics, Maori EEO practitioners see it as subverting treaty-based employment policies:

> There are some benefits there but there's also the danger of detracting from things like the Treaty ... the [demographic] argument can be used here but it has to be used knowing the risks and in terms of bicultural development.

Culture in New Zealand government departments has a particular ethnic inflection. A number of departments had specific treaty-related cultural development units, which focussed on developing organisational biculturalism. Here treaty commitment is always dominant, and if managing diversity discourse is to be used as a tool, it must always refer back to the treaty.

While Maori can make a stand as tangata whenua, for other ethnic minority people the demographic rhetoric of managing diversity discourse can be seen as providing new leverage. Pacific Island people in New Zealand (about 4 per cent of the working age population during he study) often walk a narrow line between support for Maori treaty-based rights, and the need to develop strategic arguments around multiculturalism or diversity that will work for Pacific Islanders. Here is the argument of a Pacific Island speaker in favour of diversity discourse:

> Talking about diversity means that the organisation then has a responsibility to look at it how it reflects that diversity... Our push was that ethnic [groups], especially Pacific Island and Maori...would be a significant part of the future's work-force at that current group rate and those are the projections and so you have to look at them in the terms of maximising their contribution to the work-force.

She prefers diversity to an EEO model, in which identity gets reduced to equivalence. She argues instead for a kind of equality of outcomes predicted on naturalised difference:

> I could never convince anybody, especially my management ... that equality is not about the same treatment. And that came across very strongly in EEO ... To me equality means different treatment, and so you do things differently ... And so when you recognise your diversity it means that I don't have to be like you and you don't have to be like me and the way you'd reward me or work with me would be natural to me.

There is also a struggle here between an inclusive diversity model where "we're all diverse, we're all in it together so no one is being limited", as she put it, and a recognition that there are political effects of identity which are masked by an individualist model of difference: "When you say diverse it means free for all ... I can be a white racist male and not have to deal with it."

Where EEO is seen as too rigid, and/or as a failure, managing diversity offers another approach. One Pakeha supporter of managing diversity as an organisational strategy argues:

> EEO's created a backlash and by and large the people in the backlash group are the ones that are in control. Also it's made a lot of people in the target groups, especially Maori, totally uncomfortable and stigmatised and they don't like being segmented and pointed at. There's

also a compulsion to fix the target group people rather than fix the problem that caused it in the first place. So there's a lot of things that have been maybe unintended consequences but I think they've caused a lot of difficulties.

Here EEO is represented as something that is being done to certain groups of people, and where certain identities are normalised – and subsequently resisted – through being fixed as "target groups". At the same time dominant groups are seen as resisting EEO programmes through a "backlash". In contrast, managing diversity is seen here as a strategy to avoid binary models which create resistance from both groups.

Discourses of equality

In discussing discourses of difference and discourses of exploitation, I have distinguished two issues: the question of worker-driven or management-driven change; and the question of difference and how it is constructed within managing diversity discourses. I draw these issues together now to consider how EEO practitioners see diversity in relation to their work.

The concept of social equality has been central to the ways that New Zealand practitioners deal with issues of diversity and social justice in organisations, and this idea is embodied in the practices of EEO. Most New Zealand public service EEO practitioners see themselves as part of the EEO community, which has over a number of years shared certain assumptions:

That all of us who are working in this area are working towards substantive social change . . . We come into this work because of our gut connections with the issue, because of some personal understanding and analysis of discrimination and oppression or because . . . we connect with it for others if not personally for ourselves. But [now] you can't make that assumption about . . . everyone who is working in this area. And so one of the concerns has been with the use of the term "managing diversity" alongside the professionalisation of the area. Do you have people working and promoting that message who don't have any concept or desire to see fundamental change and aren't using the language as a tactical means of achieving fundamental change? . . . The concern is that some of the professionalisation of the area is the sanitising of it as well.

These EEO practitioners see themselves; while accountable to senior public service management, as working within their own clear agenda of "substantive social change". Their debates are about the "means" in relation to the "ends". In contrast, HRM professionals coming into the field are seen as using the language of managing diversity from a quite different discursive position, one which was either literally located in, or drew from, private sector accountabilities and strategies.

EEO practitioners were also concerned that managing diversity was being presented as replacing EEO, which was being positioned by managing diversity advocates as obsolete: "EEO is dead and we are on to this next phase and the next phase is bigger and better and brighter, etc., etc.. . ." In the broader context of New Zealand politics, equality politics – and those who articulated them – were at the same time being positioned as obsolete, replaced by imperatives of the market. The key concern of EEO practitioners was not that a business case for EEO was being used, but that it was being used in a "de-politicised" way. EEO practitioners were already using a business case for EEO, along with legislative and social justice arguments when they felt it was appropriate. Some EEO practitioners used the business argument – with ambivalence – as a means to an end:

The way in which you actually draw people in, the way in which you sell EEO now has to reflect that wider political, social, economic climate and what that's saying is that competition is healthy . . . I don't want to compromise the message but I do want to find and target ways in which the employers out there receive that message. So that does mean actually using different language, it does mean now promoting different selling points in terms of EEO and I still use a social justice message but I use other messages as well.

Others argued they were genuinely committed to organisational effectiveness as well as to justice, e.g.:

It's not just social justice as in being a good guy and everyone getting a good deal and stuff . . . It is also very much the fact that I think that these organisations . . . really don't benefit from . . . the diversity of people that are available . . . So I mean there are the two things really. I mean I do actually believe that.

Many of the EEO practitioners identified the absence of a structural model of discrimination as the key problem with the model of managing diversity:

I think to de-politicise it entirely is . . . going to lead to an increasing individualisation of approach – what does the individual need to develop themselves to the best advantage? . . . I think it becomes much more discretionary, at times in some workplaces . . . so that you don't actually acknowledge things as having a structural basis . . . or structural solutions.

Many practitioners related their structural analysis of organisational difference to feminist positioning and a commitment to social justice. This analytic framework allows managing diversity to be used as a persuasive ploy in certain situations, while a social justice narrative is maintained:

I don't mind people using "managing diversity" if they don't compromise the analysis about who has power and who doesn't have power. Where discrimination occurs and where it doesn't occur. Where obligations and commitments are. What you need to do structurally to bring about substantive change as opposed to window dressing.

At the same time there is a real unease with "sanitising" the message. Managing diversity is seen as "more acceptable because people feel less threatened, I mean those who aren't other groups, don't feel like somehow they've been told they've done it to other people". At the same time "leaving some of the hard bits out" may not be able to be sustained: "I think that [negative] reaction's going to be there . . . once it [the EEO programme] starts to have any bite".

Conclusion: "the issue really is who has the power and what rules they make"

Australian feminist writer Anna Yeatman has argued that feminist practitioners are most effective when they are able to:

. . . understand how discursive practices operate, how they distribute power and constitute power, and how discursive interventions are possible. This will apply no less to their own discursive practices. . . as to those of others (Yeatman, 1990, p. 160).

This understanding enables a power analysis without being limited – or limiting others – by interpreting all political or organisational issues within a single framework.

In considering EEO practitioners' accounts of managing diversity, it is critical to engage with their theories and practices about what language is, and how it relates to questions of political means and ends. In one sense, the words themselves are not important:

> Whether you want to call it employment equity, managing diversity, equal employment opportunity ... I think the term is totally irrelevant because I think it's covering up a whole multitude of sins and the issue really is who has the power and what rules they make.

The language of managing diversity may appear in more than one discursive context, with different political effects. I argue that in taking a feminist post-structuralist approach to the research presented here, it is possible to consider a range of the various perspectives involved without having to force them all on to one map. An understanding of discursive contexts allows both practitioners and scholars to think critically about how policies of managing diversity might compare to other approaches to equality and difference in organisations, and to about the varied cultural and historical contexts in which they are being implemented.

If scholars and practitioners aim to look critically at the discourse of managing diversity, they can analyse the possibilities it opens up as well as what it prevents; what it allows to be said and what is silenced or repressed. The way this works will vary from one situation to another. This does not mean a relapse back into individual single cases. Broad narratives of national identity, economic progress and gender, for instance, provide heuristic frameworks for the political effects of discourses across a range of sites. From these perspectives feminists can consider who is being marginalised and who is being placed at the centre of a given organisational discourse, dealing with each "as a unique case without losing sight of what it may share with others" (Trinh, 1994, p. 15). A term like "managing diversity" can be generated, regenerated, captured, redefined, and snatched back. Multiple readings of the terms are possible, and each has its political effects.

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Unravelling Woomera: lip sewing, morphology and dystopia

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Abstract *Presents a gendered interpretation of reports of protests in 2000-2002 among asylum seekers held at Australia's recently closed Woomera Detention Centre, discussing instances of lip sewing that evoked strong reaction from the Australian Government, people and press. Suggests that an Irigarayan gendered reading of lip sewing assists in understanding these examples of self-harm, supplementing feminist readings of craft, and calling attention to local enactments of gender in both refugee studies and in organizational development and change.*

Introduction

Recent increases in numbers of people seeking asylum and citizenship have resulted in attention to the legalities, moralities, effects and linguistics of refugee experiences. For example, Hardy and Phillips (1999, p. 7) drew attention to the importance of social context in constituting refugee subject positions, discussing tensions between concepts of human rights and sovereignty and also between paternalism and empowerment. They argued that ongoing negotiation among these positions is influenced by broader discourses on immigration, race, employment, patriotism and religion, examining cartoons as textual representations of the immigration discourse and its constitution of the Canadian Government, immigration system, public, and refugees.

Others have also drawn critical attention to definitions of the refugee (e.g. Bacon and Lynch, 2002/2003; Bibler Coutin, 1998; Malkki, 1995; Steinbock, 1998). In Australia, for example, distinctions have been made between the status of "illegal immigrants" and the more positive labelling of "asylum seekers" who seek refugee status (Stevens, 2002). However, and relevant to the subject of this special issue, there has been little attention to the place of gender in discussion of various refugee positions, although Lister (1997) has argued that, in general, the migrant remains an implicitly gendered subject who is assumed to be male (Castles and Miller, 1993; Mohanty, 1991, p. 22).

In order to redress this imbalance, we present the reporting of a series of protests among asylum seekers held at Australia's recently closed Woomera Detention Centre and suggest that the gendering of refugees in press reports extends beyond essential male/female categorizations to gendered representations of the refugee body. We draw on the works of Luce Irigaray to inform the analysis of incidents of lip sewing at Woomera as extreme illustrations of extreme circumstances, arguing for greater attention to the gendered nature of refugee studies.

In doing so, we extend discussion of the role of trigger events in expediting transformational organizational change to a wider stage, for our thesis is that the incidents of lip sewing held sufficient symbolic power to polarize public opinion and facilitated the closure of Woomera. While triggers have previously been associated

with personal, organizational and even systemic change (e.g., Beddowes and Wille, 1990; Byeon, 1999; Dyck and Starke, 1999; Isabella, 1990, 1992; Leifer, 1989; Roger, 1995; Scott and Elton, 2002; Staudenmayer *et al.*, 2002; Tichy and Ulrich, 1994), their symbolism has rarely been examined through the lens of gender (see Foreman, 2001; Gherardi, 1995; Martin, 1990; Ogbor, 2000).

We draw on poststructural feminism and the destabilization of gender categories (Alvesson and Due Billing, 1997; Calás and Smircich, 1996; Harding, 1992; Riley, 1988) to show how the representation of asylum seekers as irresponsible and non-rational in the Australian popular press between 2000 and 2002 reproduced conservative and Australian values. This was achieved through the construction of asylum seeker identities that represented "the other"; as outsiders whose marginal presence reaffirmed that of the centre in terms of race, family values and, in particular, masculinity (Green *et al.*, 2001, p. 192; Fraser and Nicholson, 1988; Mohanty, 1991). Following Acker (1992), our interest lies in how this particular order was created and our aim is to encourage critical reflection on its production and effects within a highly charged local context.

As Calás and Smircich (1999, p. 653) have argued, "[p]oststructuralist analyses demonstrate how signification occurs through *a constant deferral of meaning* from one linguistic symbol to another", and we present ours in several steps. First, we give a contextual overview of Woomera. Then we discuss instances of lip sewing that evoked strong reactions from the Australian Government, people and press. We suggest that the special place of lips within Irigaray's feminist morphology assists in understanding the extremity of these reactions, and conclude that an Irigarayan reading of lip sewing as gendered assists in analyzing this particular example of organizational change, in supplementing feminist readings of craft-based activism, and in the broader contesting of public-private domains.

Overview of the Woomera detention centre, South Australia

A rapid increase in unauthorized arrivals to Australia in the late 1990s led to the establishment of detention facilities in remote locations (Stevens, 2002, p. 889; see also Australian Broadcasting Commission, 2003). One of these was Woomera, which was located in northern South Australia (see Robinson, 2002). Enclosed by razor wire, Woomera was built to house 400, but nearly 1,500 asylum seekers were detained there by April 2000 (Australian Broadcasting Commission, 2003). Woomera was labelled as Australia's "most controversial detention centre" (Skelton, 2003) due to riots, escape attempts and incidents of detainee self-harm and abuse (Skelton, 2003; Stevens, 2002). There was much public demonstration at and press coverage of these events. Eventually, after resolution of visa requests, movement of detainees, and reduced new arrivals (Manne, 2002), Woomera was closed in April 2003 (Australian Broadcasting Commission, 2003).

In early 2002, detainees at Woomera took part in a hunger strike that lasted over two weeks when the Australian government temporarily stopped processing claims for asylum by Afghans (Australian Broadcasting Commission, 2003; Madigan *et al.*, 2002; Parker, 2002; Skelton, 2003). It was reported that 189 people took part in the strike, of which 62 sewed their lips together (Australian Broadcasting Commission, 2002a). While this lip sewing was but one type of self-harm at Woomera (Australian Broadcasting Commission, 2003; Manne, 2002), and while this incident was both

preceded and followed by others (Australian Broadcasting Commission, 2002b; Di Girolamo, 2002; Lowth, 2000; Parker, 2002), we focus on it here as it was widely publicized in the popular press (Steketee, 2002; Hardy and Phillips, 1999; Scott, 1990) and as it became a site for contestation that was symbolic of Woomera, of the detainee predicament as a whole and even, through cartoon representations, of Government silence and shame.

Representations of lip sewing protests in the popular press

One early representation of the lip sewers was that they were prepared to exploit their position of disadvantage. For example, it had been claimed that in 2002 asylum seekers had forcibly sewn their children's lips together as a desperate attempt to gain publicity for their plight. While no evidence was found (Australian Broadcasting Commission, 2002a; Maiden, 2002; *Sun Herald, 2002*), the claim was important not only in regard to the current conditions but also as an intertextual reference back to earlier (and also unproven) claims that in October 2001, boat-ridden asylum seekers had thrown their children overboard in an effort to blackmail the Australian Navy into picking them up (Australian Broadcasting Commission, 2002a; Steketee, 2002; Yaxley, 2002). At the time, Prime Minister John Howard had been quoted as stating, "I can't imagine how a genuine refugee would ever do that"*(*Australian Broadcasting Commission, 2002a). By implication, an asylum-seeker who sewed up the lips of a child was also unlikely to have "genuine" intent. Partly as a result, media attention became focused on the detainees at Woomera and, in particular, on their children (e.g. Macken, 2002; Manne, 2002).

Particular abhorrence to lip sewing in Australia was illustrated in reporting responses to a radio commercial that made light of the lip sewing. To the Immigration Minister Phillip Ruddock, "[lip sewing is] a practice unknown in our culture...that offends the sensitivities of Australians". To Mr Ruddock's opponents, it is an obscenity that proves that detention camps are destroying people psychologically (Australian Broadcasting Commission, 2002c).With respect to the first of these views, lip sewing is presented as a non-rational activity undertaken by "others" capable of barbarous activities unknown (and unwelcome) in Australian civil/ized society. Asylum seekers have also been portrayed as childish and undeserving of public sympathy. For example, Bolt (2002) suggested that:

> There are two explanations why most Australians still disagree with the commentators and activists who insist we give in to the *lip-sewing asylum seekers* of Woomera. The first, popular at fashionable dinner parties, is that the public is stupid, selfish, heartless, racist and scared of the other. The alternative, preferred by millions of parents who have raised toddlers to be civilised, is that we've learned that pandering to someone who is banging their head on a floor or holding their breath until they turn blue just reinforces bad behaviour (Bolt, 2002, p. 21, our emphasis).

Subsequent debate centered on whether or not lip sewing was culturally specific to those of Middle Eastern origin. In the context of the events following the terrorist attacks on the USA in September 2001, the potential association of this act with the Middle Eastern Muslim extremists was highly inflammatory and also unproven, representing a further attempt to demonize those seeking Australian asylum. Not only were asylum seekers presented as uncivilized, they were also possible terrorists who may cause substantial harm if released into the general community (*Sydney Morning*

, 2002) – or may, at the very least, encourage others to follow them to Australia (Steketee, 2002). Thus, while the asylum seekers' voices literally could not be heard, their presence became a site for the location of otherness, of difference, and of the insecurity of their commentators.

In contrast, and in an effort to present just what the lip sewers suffered in order to make their silent statements, Williams (2002) described the act of lip sewing as horrifying. In addition, psychiatrists from Australia and overseas reported that lip sewing was not a cultural expression, and an American self-harm expert reported that there is "nothing particularly cultural about this behaviour. It simply reflects desperation" (Williams, 2002, p. 8; Bosworth and Carrabine, 2001).

In summary, incidents of lip sewing at Woomera have been used in various ways to signify lip sewers as social and political subjects either to be demonized or pitied, and whose experiences have been reported within the wider context of contemporary discourse on migration, population control, civil society and international affairs (Hardy and Phillips, 1999).

In the next section, we suggest that the extremity of the reactions to and reporting of lip sewing at Woomera may also be informed by recognition that lips are highly gendered sites for analysis, and that lip sewers are also *gendered* subjects. In particular, we suggest that the special place of lips within Irigaray's feminist morphology assists in understanding the extremity of responses to these incidents of self-harm, and why the repeated occurrence of lip sewing at Woomera served to present that centre as an exemplar of a dystopia that was no longer tolerable.

Irigaray's feminist morphology

As presented by Weedon (1997), poststructuralist theory places emphasis on the location of language within specific discourses that represent political interests and socially produce subjectivity and consciousness (Weedon, 1997, pp. 40, 179; see also Calás and Smircich, 1999). Within this, "psychoanalytic forms of poststructuralism look to a fixed psycho-sexual order" (Weedon, 1997, p. 22; see also Calás and Smircich, 1996). For example, in *This Sex Which Is Not One* ("TS"), Irigaray (1985) presents a sexuality that is informed by psychoanalysis but not defined within masculine parameters (Weedon, 1997, p. 61; see also Grosz, 1989, p. 105), arguing that women need to become speaking subjects in their own right, autonomously defined rather than "objects of exchange within a masculine sexual imaginary" (Whitford, 1999, p. 76).

For Irigaray, female pleasure or *jouissance*, later called "love of self on the side of the woman", is the condition of challenging phallocratic indifference (Whitford, 1999, p. 76), and Irigaray adopts mimicry as her preferred device to "jam the theoretical machinery" of Freudian and post-Freudian analysis (Whitford, 1999, p. 126; see also Chanter, 1995, p. 241; Gatens, 1991, p. 116; Xu, 1995). Accordingly, Irigaray argues that female sexuality is autoerotic and plural and "is no longer constituted by a lack, as in Freud" (Weedon, 1997, p. 61). Instead, female libido is located in at least two sets of lips (one horizontal and one vertical) that touch each other all the time (Whitford, 1999). These are lips where no joining suture is possible and whose perpetual half-openness makes them "strangers to dichotomy", offering a "threshold unto *mucosity*" that symbolizes potential for creation (Whitford, 1999, p. 175; emphasis in original; see also Grosz, 1989, pp. 105, 108, 115).

As an open container, Irigaray's woman cannot be enclosed, mastered or appropriated (Whitford, 1999, p. 28), for something escapes or resists closure (p. 97) and *residues* "exceed patriarchal representations" (Grosz, 1989, p. 109). This symbolic resistance, together with Irigaray's ambiguous writing style, serves to undermine "the dominance of the phallic, the well-formed, clarity, [and] singularity of meaning" (Gatens, 1991, p. 117). For example, Berg (1991, p. 56) has argued that Irigaray's "lips that speak to themselves" are carefully chosen for their textual and sexual ambiguity. As explained by Grosz (1989), the importance of the two lips stems from their *morphology*, a term that Irigaray uses to refer to "the social and psychical meaning of the body" – to ways in which the body and anatomy of each sex is lived by the subject and represented in culture. Accordingly, "If discourses and representations give the body its form and meaning, then feminist struggles must direct themselves to the representational or symbolic order which shapes women's bodies only in the (inverted) image of men's" (Grosz, 1989, pp. xix-xx; see also Gatens, 1991, p. 115). Irigaray's Utopic vision is for "the end of masculine truth" and for a new meeting of the sexes based on touch rather than on vision and the privileging of the visible over the invisible, and of male genitalia over female genitalia that cannot be seen (Brodribb, 1992, p. 108).

Woomera as an Irigarayan dystopia

Xu (1995) argues that any absurdity in Irigaray's lips speaking to themselves is similar to absurdity in the phallogocentric tradition (see also Berg, 1991). As explained by Burrell (1992, p. 83), the term "phallogocentricism" is being used by Irigaray (1985) "to describe the very strong Western tradition which relegates the feminine to the position of matter, material or object against which the masculine defines itself". For Xu (1995), Irigaray parodies phallogocentric discourse and fabricates essentialist truths in an act of playful repetition and disruption without simply making the lips "the new phallus" (see also Berg, 1991). Similarly, Whitford (1999, p. 97) argues that Irigaray's emphasis on lips should not be read as a "regressive retreat to the anatomical" but as a way to allow women to speak their sex and "to become speaking subjects in their own right" (Whitford, 1999, p. 76; see also Brodribb, 1992, p. 100; Chanter, 1995, pp. 3, 165-6). However, Irigaray's use of mimicry in her attention to lips has led to considerable controversy and debate over whether and to what extent she may be considered either a psychic or biological essentialist (Davidson and Smith, 1999; Xu, 1995).

Recognizing this debate, we suggest that the extremity of the reactions to, and reporting of, lip sewing at Woomera may have to do with lip sewing having gendered symbolism in addition to its literal protest as a means of resisting feeding during a hunger strike and its immediate signification as an indicator of the silence and silenced position of the asylum seekers in detention.

We argue this on four grounds. First, while there has been attention to the role of gender in various forms of protest in prison situations (e.g., Bosworth and Carrabine, 2001), we suggest that the asylum seekers' use of lip sewing as self-harm has been particularly powerful as it embodied the stifling of *jouissance*. Specifically, lip sewing is not only an act that draws attention to the silencing of voice but also does so through reducing the plurality of the half-open mouth to the (more masculine) singular. It displays the pain of a return to the phallocentrism of this singularity, and to its assimilative processes (Grosz, 1989; Whitford, 1999).

Second, we suggest that in lip sewing, the joining suture *is* possible and the visible threads serve to force the lips not only to be joined but also to remain joined. Rather than an ironic tactile utopia, what was created at Woomera was a tactile dystopia that reconstructed feminine morphology. What lip sewing produced was, literally, a closed, single mouth – a grotesque masculinity in Irigarayan morphology – and one that was broadcast nightly on television screens around the world.

Third, whether the lip sewing was done to men or to women, it reinforced (even without intention) the invisibility of the refugees because of its association with the invisibility of female sexuality. That it was done mainly by men who came from strongly patriarchal cultures and that it was done in a detention context which, like that of a prison, may amplify masculinity (Bosworth and Carrabine, 2001) may have, in turn, amplified its own power as an act of resistance and so we argue that both the extent of coverage of this act and the strength of reaction to it is not coincidental.

Fourth, whether or not lip sewing is of symbolic importance in Afghan or Iraqi cultures, it was certainly an important trigger in contemporary Australia. By sewing their lips, the asylum seekers triggered responses of fury, of sympathy, of dismissal and even of voyeurism more usually associated with women's protests in Western patriarchal society. Thus, even in terms of its effects, lip sewing was a gendered act that amplified the existing (and already strong) tensions around issues of immigration and identified the asylum seekers as gendered subjects. Its power as a signifier and even as an identifier (the "lip-sewing asylum seekers"), lies in its capacity to represent the intersection of competing discourses, including those around gender. In the end, the combination of tensions within and around the centre became so intolerable that the centre was closed.

In summary, the accounts of the lip sewing protests presented those protests as non-rational desperate pleas for voice and also as gendered acts that positioned the asylum seekers as vulnerable and inscribed them as "women-like" to readers and listeners (Calás and Smircich, 1992a, p. 226). As a result, and despite the fact that most of these protests were not actually carried out by women, they can be seen as symbolic performances of femininity (Acker, 1992; Green, *et al.*, 2001) that served to reinforce both patriarchy and, ironically, the Australian public's resistance to the asylum seekers' position. The horror of these desperate acts of self-harm was not a horror that could be understood – only one that served to further the protestors' position as "other".

Conclusion: lip sewing, craft and gender

While this analysis may be seen as gender "over-sensitivity" (Alvesson and Due Billing, 1997), distasteful (Zalewski, 2000), and specific to these asylum seekers in this set of circumstances, we use it as an extreme illustration to call for greater attention to unravelling local enactments of gender in refugee studies (Lister, 1997) and also in traditional organizational development and change settings where analysis of trigger events, change agent roles, client-consultant dynamics and change intervention technologies may well be gendered even where they lack reference to essential notions of "women as women" (Spelman, 1988, p. 17; see also Calás and Smircich, 1992b, 1999; Ferguson, 1997; Zalewski, 2000).

Further, both the press accounts of lip sewing and the act itself are rich with symbolism as grotesque parody of the familiarity of domestic sewing, a craft activity

usually associated with serenity and with domestic, private and therefore feminine domains (Burman, 1999). Accordingly, we call for further extension of the theorizing of craft, for an Irigarayan reading of lip sewing as gendered assists in supplementing feminist readings of craft-based activism (see Wolfram Cox and Minahan, 2002) and in the broader contesting of public-private domains (Green *et al.*, 2001).

Finally, while Irigaray's works have been somewhat neglected in organizational studies (exceptions include Burrell, 1992; Calás and Smircich, 1991, 1996), they may supplement existing metatheoretical discussions on the difficulty of standing above and/or outside existing analytical paradigms (see Grosz, 1989, p. 128). We find her parodies to be both amusing and inviting, particularly where they offer Utopic imaginings and potentials. However, in this paper we have, instead, presented a morphological dystopia in an effort to extend understanding of a shameful period in Australian immigration history. In so doing, we suggest that Irigaray also offers new ways of engaging with material arenas that are distasteful and disquietening. Seeing lip sewing as craft offers one such disruptive possibility – gendered, embodied, subversive craft.

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Contested rationalities, contested organizations

Feminist and postmodernist visions

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Abstract *Postmodernist contestations of modernist economic and organizational rationalities have made immense contributions to organizational analysis. A current direction in critical theory now, working through the postmodernist critique, seeks new conceptions of organizations and sources for the revitalization of organizational life. In particular, feminist criticism drawing on, and contributing to, postmodern forms of inquiry and interpretation, offers new visions of critical organizational analysis. This article addresses feminist postmodern critiques, and particularly discusses two feminist contributions developed out of serious critical engagement with postmodernist thought: eco-feminism and conceptions of "relational autonomy", of agentic, social subjectivity.*

Introduction

Although postmodern theoretical interests remain robust in current organization theory, some critical analysts are seeking modes of analysis and paths of practice beyond postmodern interventions. Postmodernist problematics have generated a raft of important questions and challenges to conventional modernist organization theories, and postmodernist theorizations have contributed a plethora of investigative approaches to, and interpretations of, contemporary organizational practices. Yet notwithstanding these immense contributions, there remain pressing questions in organizational analysis and practice for which neither conventional modernist nor postmodernist approaches and formulations advance analytic understanding or transformative practical applicability. The hoped-for emancipatory possibilities in organizational analysis and practice offered by postmodernism's discursive undecidability and incommensurable pluralities of meaning and value – as the grand critique of monological modernist rationalities of production organization – have scarcely been realized. Critical theorists, including feminists, point out that substantive alterations to organizational practice beyond strategic restructurings and realignments of conventional power relations in contemporary conditions are a long time coming. For some, the critical moment of postmodernist intervention in modernist organization theory has been largely incorporated into strategic neo-rational models of strategic business organization (see Casey, 2002) and a now globalizing hyper-liberal capitalism asserts a triumphant end of history.

Nonetheless, postmodernist criticism, after modernist critical theory, has thoroughly exposed the poverty of much modernist theory of organizations (notably but not only of structural-functionalism and its many derivatives) and the moral eclipse of economic rationalism. Accordingly modernist organization theory, typically delimited by modernist technical and instrumental rationalities, provides little substantive answer to the postmodern disruption. A principal task confronting

organizational analysts and practitioners now is one that seeks not simply a salvage and repair enterprise – a renovation and restoration of the modernist agenda under the guise of current catchwords such as innovation, flexibility, diversity, and reformed bureaucracy – nor a postmodern iconoclasm that cynically observes, or denies, the politically coercive organizational response to extreme uncertainty and multiple contestation in neo-conservative restoration. The task upon us is the construction in organization theory and practice of analytical and practical frameworks that are capable of a surpassing response to the accelerated competition and moral deregulation so apparent in economically dominated social life which has reduced social, cultural and planetary life to routinized market commodification. This task is necessarily a collective one. At the forefront of its theorization and labour are critical theorists informed by both modernist and postmodernist forms of criticism, especially feminism, Marxism, and poststructuralism – in their various iterations.

In this essay, I wish to discuss in particular an important trajectory in the formulation of criticism in organizational practice. This trajectory, which we may call a turn to ethical and substantive value questions, emerges out of contemporary reflections. It represents the immensely important postmodernist and critical modernist depiction of organizations as dynamic fields of forces, of contested and negotiated rationalities and sites of action. That is, rather than conceiving organizations as abstracted and neutral systemic entities functioning according to asocial, irrefutable laws, the critical vision – now richly informed by postmodernist conceptions – highlights the dynamic, contested and always mutable domains of organizational construction and enactment[1].

The critical demand now arising after such postmodern disturbance opens debates on a sober reconsideration and revitalization of substantive rationalities of socio-cultural ends – or put simply, to conceptions of what it means to practice good organization and production in a decent society. Feminist contributions in both posing and addressing these critical demands for a reconstitution of organizational means-ends values offer richly insightful and practically grounded sources of analysis and transformative action in organizational life. In particular, feminist attention to ethical practices of organization in society on a small planet is demanding a focus on both internal human relations within organizational workplaces, and on ecological concerns consequent of economically rational production. The feminist approach to contesting dominant organizational rationalities endeavours to reveal the transformative possibilities of contested organizations and to tease out their practical applications in everyday organizational life.

Contemporary organizations operate in social contexts of increased complexity, permeability and risk. Accordingly, sustaining sufficient coherence and integration requisite for everyday organizational practice is increasingly problematic. Political and management techniques for maintaining coherence and containing ambiguity and plural contestations have typically delivered responses in a well-worn range: from hard line industrial relations to unitarist, conflict-denying organizational familial cultures, and to indeterminate, dispersed and virtual organizations as linguistic mystifications of intensified corporate power. Beyond this range of organization theory and management practice options, feminist theorists are contributing to a new framework of ethical organizational practice that is simultaneously responsive to human and

planetary interests for which a growing chorus of voices is demanding attention, and which hyper-modern organizational practices ignore.

A framework of ethics for organizational practice builds on ground prepared by both the heritage of modernist criticism – from the Human Relations school of management and organizational thought, to the Frankfurt School critical theorists (see, for example, Alvesson and Deetz, 1996, Casey, 2002, Hassard, 1993, Reed, 1992, for review discussions) to contemporary organization and management theorists such as Etzioni (1998) and Handy (1997) – and by the postmodernist search for ethics drawn from a recent generation of philosophers including Foucault and Levinas (see, for example, Bauman, 1993, Casey, 2002, Smart, 1999 for discussions). Feminist theorists add further contribution to the seeking of alternatives to both the normative modernist and postmodernist positions. In this short paper I select for particular discussion two illustrative contributions from contemporary feminist thought. One is that of Barbara Adam's postmodernist eco-feminism and its critique of economic organizational practice. The other is the work of feminist philosophers Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar who pose a "relational autonomy" alternative to both modernist and postmodernist formulations of the subject and agency. These works arise out of serious engagement with modernist and postmodernist problematics. Both have direct relevance to organizational analysis, especially that concerned with the directions of organizational change and its substantive socio-cultural ends. In order to refine the context of this discussion and highlight its importance a brief interpretive review of postmodernism in organizational analysis is first pertinent.

Postmodernism in organizational analysis
Although the idea of the postmodern is by no means a cultural dominant it is at the centre of intellectual debate and analysis in the West. At a popular intellectual level the discursive deconstruction and vigilant interruption of Western metaphysical assumptions and the privileged categories of Enlightenment humanism and modernist reason, understood as postmodernism, is a current vogue. In organization and management studies the cultural turn of postmodernism is variously invoked, and it has even, ironically, been utilized in the legitimation of quite diverse new organizational practices including those of a neo-liberal deregulation and labour exploitation, to playful depictions of organizations as jazz bands and conversations. More formally, though, a more serious concern with the limits of modernist reason and its rationalized, economistic culture appear in postmodern social theories indicating a somewhat more sober and serious engagement with its questions and the moral and practical dilemmas to which it has given rise.

The debates over whether the postmodern is more usefully understood as a historical period following modernity or as an epistemological position with varying claims to acceptability as an emancipatory counter-movement or a nihilist anti-humanist revolt continue to animate discussion in the academy, including in organization and management studies. Initially, critical organizational analysts who had become increasingly disillusioned with the Marxist-inspired criticism of modernist critical theory brought postmodernist ideas and approaches to organizational analysis. For these critics (e.g. Burrell, 1988, Cooper and Burrell, 1988, Clegg, 1990, Hassard and Parker, 1993, Reed and Hughes, 1992 and many others through the 1990s), postmodernists offered a way out of the modernist crisis and academic intrication with

totalizing technocratic rationality. For these writers, the postmodern offered a significant break with both modernist conventional organization practices and theories and the long-standing critiques of political economy, structure and capitalist relations of power of earlier generations of critics. Initially, the postmodern disruption to modernist categories and methods, from the privileged, universalized, notions of reason, truth, man, progress, to the positivist epistemologies and certainties of modernist social science (although these latter critiques had been thoroughly elaborated by an earlier generation of Frankfurt School theorists), launched challenges and opportunities in organizational analysis that the modernist frameworks and agenda had foreclosed.

Amid the diversity of postmodernist endeavours relating to the study of organization a number of thematic clusters are discernible in which problematics of more characteristically postmodern vein are addressed. Postmodernist perspectives on organizational analysis are most often concerned with linguistic practices, which construct and represent knowledge and meaning. Their approaches employ poststructuralist linguistic deconstruction methodologies to show the arbitrariness of linguistic signs and the plurality of interpretive systems. They reveal the inherent undecidability of all of truth, knowledge and power claims. Prominent practices include the depiction and deconstruction of organization and of management practices as narratives; a heightened interest in power, control and disciplinary practices; attention to sex and gender practices within organization practice and theory; and interests in matters of subjectivity, self-identity, and culture (e.g. Boje *et al.*, 1996, Calas and Smircich, 1996, 1997; Clegg *et al.*, 1996; Hassard and Parker, 1993). These efforts contested and disrupted modernist notions of power and authority, of economic and bureaucratic rationality, order, efficiency, regulation, and legitimation and conventional modernist assumptions about managing human behaviour, especially emotion and sexuality.

Some of these criticisms have encouraged in organizational practice considerable attention to organizational culture, including the recognition of ethnic and sexual diversity, and myriad communicational and value systems and micro-processes within the organization. Moreover, attention to processes and values associated with organizational change has drawn much theoretical and practical insight from postmodernist perspectives and criticisms of organization.

Postmodernist and post-structuralist frameworks posed a thorough contestation of conventional organizational analysis and management studies. Contested organizational rationalities offered much emancipatory potential for organizational practice and analysis, and for workers within production organization. But the uses of these approaches have produced disparate results. The rise in popularity and diversity of postmodern approaches to organizational analysis, and for many the apparent impasse with conventional modernist forms of analysis, has led to claims and counter-claims of paradigm incommensurability in the field. A deep pluralism in value and belief systems and a ceaseless deconstruction of any normative positions from which critique may be posed and evaluated generates either intractable oppositions and closure of debate, or a pragmatic utilization of selected postmodernist ideas and methods by modernist management rationalists.

Feminist uses of postmodernism

Feminist organizational analysts have typically welcomed the postmodern cultural turn. Postmodern theorizations provide a rich source of theoretical validation of much feminist criticism formulated in earlier decades. Now, a longer-standing feminist disruption of particular, masculinist, Euro-centred points of view[2] projected as universal reasoned norms – for example the depiction of organizations as gender neutral and impersonal – has gained much support by particular interpretations of a complex philosophy of deconstruction of Western metaphysics – especially that of Derrida and Foucault – and an anti-humanist critical genealogy of historically specific cultural practices.

In particular, for example, feminists have embraced Foucault's (1972, 1975) questioning of the discourses of power and identification of power's multiple sites and effects. Utilising Foucaultian theories they have developed critical analyses of organizational practices of power and control, sexuality, identity, and discursivity in contemporary organizations, which have been under-addressed in modernist organization analysis and criticism (e.g. Alvesson and Billing, 1997; Calas and Smircich, 1996; Mills and Tancred, 1992; Hearn *et al.*, 1989). Calas and Smircich (1996) also address the ways in which sex and gender practices are constructed or ignored by academic analysts of organizations. In much of this work Foucault's genealogical exploration of sexuality is seen as offering both critical deconstructions and new and potentially creative ways of practising sex and gender in organizations. Feminists, however, have often struggled to deal with their selective invocation of Foucaultian theory[3]. Their effort generally is to find much that is insightful and useful for criticism of various aspects of organizational practice but to avoid, or reject, the implications of a closed system of critical theory in which all claims to knowledge, meaning and preferred practice are irresolvably relative and always subject to deconstruction.

For many, most obviously feminist theorists, the oppositional and disruptive contribution of postmodernist theories offers innovative analytical and practical counter-positions to modernist depictions of organizational life. Importantly, feminists have argued against a widely held management view that formal organization theory is of little relevance to a practitioner audience. In converse to this view that the sole purview of organization theory are the practical tasks of increasing organizational production and profit, and improving managerial systems, feminists (and other critical analysts) insist that organization theory and practice is indeed relevant, and socially embedded in the contexts of the millions of humans working in and affected by organizational practice every day.

Notwithstanding the various incorporative uses of the radical and disruptive intervention of postmodernist thought, a vital contribution of postmodernist theorisations more recently emerges. Following Foucault (1972, 1975) and Levinas in Peperzak *et al.* (1996) especially (among many others) a turn towards ethics in, and following, postmodernist thought gains much attention. In particular, and the matter to which I now turn, feminist ethical thought – which includes the ecological – is a significant manifestation of this rising interest. Arising out of earlier modernist and recent postmodernist criticism, it extends its reach into organization and management studies.

Feminism, ethics and organization

There are many eminent philosophers engaged in the complex arena of ethics, morality, and ultimate questions of how we should live and what we should do. For many thinkers influenced by the postmodern turn, recognition of the need to renegotiate ethical principles and forms of morality in an always contested, ambiguous and unpredictable cultural sphere is vital. For them postmodernism's effort to oppose, deconstruct, and fragment may enable an emancipation from the confining, ultimately tyrannical order of the modernist. Bauman (1993), for instance, following Foucault, proposes a postmodern ethics that refuses the juridicalizing order of the modernist and poses an alternative ideal of "moral autonomy", a situated "unprincipled" morality, a morality without foundations by which people manage to live day to day (Bauman, 1993, p. 32). For Bauman (1993), "unprincipled" refers here to an insisted absence of received moral orders, in preference for a dynamic of renegotiation and recognition of specificities and personalism.

For others, including Taylor (1995), the idea of a reimposition of universal moral precepts is similarly undesirable. But it is not an unprincipled morality (or one without foundation) that they seek. Rather, it is communities of humans that must negotiate, in now extant conditions of pluralism, practices of responsibility among individuals and their organizations, which constrain the practices of rights and freedoms privileged in recent decades. While a full discussion of these philosophical debates must be deferred, their sketch here indicates the theoretical and practical difficulties in moving beyond modernist, universalist foundations, and postmodern anti-foundationalism and anti-essentialism. Feminist formulations of contemporary ethical questions arise out of close engagement with these wider philosophical debates and their problems. Feminist ethical thought is finding its way into efforts to retheorize organizations, and to addressing concerns for ethical practice in organizational analysis and management practice. Feminists are drawing variously on these debates, and utilizing older feminist ideas of both personalism and collectivism. My effort in the following section is to illuminate ways in which contemporary feminist thought poses questions of organizations that expose the contradictions of economic organization dislodged from socio-cultural values and ecological constraints.

There are two main areas of ethical interest that I want to discuss. Both have arisen from the enduring contribution of the postmodern disruption which requires, after the fall of modernist certainties and universalising rationalities, the negotiated management of contested and plural rationalities, in Weber's (1978) terms, of socio-cultural value-ends and everyday practice. These two areas are that of ecological imperatives, and the renewed attention to agentic subjectivity in organizations. Feminist theorists are at the forefront of these debates.

Eco-feminist criticism and vision

Eco-feminist thought argues that organizational practices are profoundly relevant to the health and sustainability of the earth's ecosystems and cannot morally be left as the exclusive domain of conventional organization scientists and capitalist economists. There is manifest diversity in eco-feminist thought; see, for instance, the work of Mellor (1997) and Gaard (1998), and some of which attends more to the spiritual than the economic (e.g. Plant, 1989). The discussion here is restricted to a selection of eco-feminist arguments that address economic and organizational activity and the

ecologically disastrous course upon which hyper-modern production organizations are set. For these eco-feminists, notably Barbara Adam, wide discussion of ethics concerning all aspects of production organization activity is vital (Adam, 1996, Adam *et al.*, 1997; Beck, 1992; Bullis and Glaser, 1992; Casey, 2000; Lash *et al.*, 1996; Mellor, 1997).

Feminist ecologists argue that production organizations, constituted as rational economic institutions, are ineluctably intricated in the expansion of now incalculable risk of environmental and ecosystem destruction. While academicians circulate their strained uncertainties and anti-foundationalism within the academy these same conditions, which allow hyper-rationalized, neo-liberal capitalism to flourish, are scarcely addressed. Organizational analysts need to enter serious ethical debate and consider generative possibilities and substantive alternatives to organizations-as-usual. For these thinkers, postmodernism is criticized for languishing in academicized deconstruction, linguistic elisions and playful undecidability. They propose that an ecological imperative in heightened confrontation with conventional production organization practice compels attention and active response. The ecological imperative extends and reconfigures the vision and domain of ethical action beyond modernist and postmodernist organizational criticism. While we need to reorganize and revitalize organizations in ways that attend to many non-economic human needs and interests, we must simultaneously undo the abstraction of economic and moral domains from embodied earthly relationships.

A contemporary prominent exponent of the eco-feminist critique, Barbara Adam, argues that economic rationalities of organizational production practices have excluded recognition from calculation of value of the ecological and the immaterial. She argues that substantive matters "of the contemporary global condition" still eluding the modernist vision in economic organization such as "unknowable features, the scale and speed of changes, the connectivity and interrelatedness of processes, time-lags and periods of invisibility", do not absolve us from responsibility for their effects (Adam, 1996, p. 99). Furthermore, she argues that the present state of scientific inquiry must be "extended and transcended.", demanding a serious and sophisticated postmodern approach, that is neither playful nor undecidable, Adam (1996, p. 99) argues that modernist forms of scientific and rational knowledge and inquiry must be surpassed by:

> A system of knowledge and practice that can encompass the im/material and accept the personal as political, ecological and global. This requires far-reaching changes... first, it necessitates moving our exclusive trust in materiality to include as central the invisible, virtual and spiritual. Second, it requires a shift in emphasis from the past to the future and from short- to long-term concerns that extend beyond personal interest... Third, it demands an extension beyond individualist, Eurocentric and humanist concerns to an interest in *all* of humanity, *all* of life and the cosmos, *all* time past and future, a move from exclusive to inclusive being.

Adam's insights, shared by other analysts who have worked through modernist and postmodernist criticism, recognize that knowledge inventions represent the effects of power and choices are not therefore neutral and natural (including Beck, 1992; Casey, 2000; Gorz, 1994; Lash *et al.*, 1996). Furthermore, they are importantly finding parallel expression in some strands of contemporary organization and management writings. They appear, for instance, in the tentative expressions of rising interest in new demands for relationality and even spirituality in organizational workplaces. These

include growing calls for work and family life balance, accommodation of expressions of "soul and spirit and work", and for attention to affective and bodily well being needs (e.g. Briskin, 1996; Handy, 1997; Lewin and Regine, 2000). Another and pressing implication of eco-feminist criticism stimulating these growing sensitivities in organizational life proposes a turn to sustainability conceived much more broadly than mere organizational survival and for alternatives to conventional growth (Daly, 1996). A "revitalization" as I have proposed elsewhere (Casey, 2002) or a "moral awakening" as Clegg (2003) proposes, is stimulating moves beyond deconstructive criticism. It is calling attention and demanding practical response to neglected or occluded aspects of organizational practice.

For the eco-feminists, current organization practice fails to grasp and respond to planetary finitude and non-human life value. Change of the magnitude required begins with an exposition and rejection of assumptions embedded in totalizing economic rationality as the governing principles of organizational activity. Criticism must move, as Beck *et al.* (1994), p. 51) puts it, to "the transition to the siege of the status quo by alternatives. The ecological issue must be worked down into other questions: technology, development, production arrangements, product policy . . . organizational and administrative forms".

These demands pose considerable challenges for conventionally rational organizational practices for which ecological sensibilities are extraneous. The ways in which eco-feminist criticism and imperatives may affect organizational practice are undetermined. But the first effects of eco-feminist criticism and revisioning are observed in a current stimulation of theoretical reconceptualisations of organizational activity in eco-social environments. Newly articulated ethical demands stimulate new forms of organizational action.

The task of formulating alternative conceptions and practices is shared and assisted, not so much by Bauman's postmodern ethics of private, autonomous moral individuals, but by a group of feminist philosophers who pose an alternative conception of the agentic, social self. These feminist philosophers, discussed below, theorize a "relational autonomy" and propose that a negotiated community of relationships in a social polity is able to recognize the universal moments transcending pluralism. An ecological, planetary, imperative is one such moment.

Feminism and contested autonomy

Another important contribution from feminist thought with direct bearing on organization theory and organizational change draws from contemporary philosophy. Feminist philosophy addressing notions of the self, the subject, autonomy and agency has a long history, but I select for particular discussion in this article, the recent work of Mackenzie and Stoljar (2000). Their work illustrates current efforts to move beyond excessive deconstruction and undecidability and to proceed to forms of collective practice of change and social recomposition.

Mackenzie and Stoljar (2000) offer a reformulation of the postmodern rejection of modernist notions of the rational, and of autonomy and independence. While most postmodern feminists have accepted the Foucaultian critique of the Kantian subject – of the allegedly self-mastered man – and regard such notions of autonomy and rationality as historically and culturally specific, Mackenzie and Stoljar (2000) argue that reducing autonomy to complicity with domination and suppression of others is

misguided. While retaining a necessary feminist caution towards notions of autonomy and agency, they propose to offer a richer account of the autonomous agent than that classically formulated and than that classically rejected by feminists:

> The general [postmodern] critique conflates the notion of autonomy with certain conceptions of autonomous *agents*... [S]ome conceptions of autonomous agents have functioned historically to enforce exclusionary forms and ideals of the person. But ... the concept of autonomy need not be based on such assumptions about agents (Mackenzie and Stoljar, 2000, p. 11).

Their effort endeavours to develop alternative notions of autonomy, which are based on "more psychically complex, and more diverse conceptions of agents" (Mackenzie and Stoljar, 2000). The alternative notion of autonomy they develop takes into account the complex histories and memories in which agents are embedded. Their self-agent, therefore, is conceived as always and necessarily relational. Accordingly, in contrast to the modernist humanist, Kantian, conception of the subject and to Foucaultian conceptions of the discursively subjectified, non-agentic subject – as effect of shifting configurations of power – Mackenzie and Stoljar (2000) pose a "relational autonomy" that derives from the social relations within which agents are embedded. The notion of relational autonomy involves conceptualising "agents as emotional, embodied, desiring, creative and feeling, as well as rational, creatures" (Mackenzie and Stoljar, 2000, p. 21). These emphasize the importance to autonomy of features of agents that have been neglected such as "memory, imagination, and emotional dispositions and attitudes".

Mackenzie and Stoljar (2000, p. 21) argue, "[r]ecognizing that agents are both psychically internally differentiated and socially differentiated from others calls for a reconceptualization of certain notions... such as integration, identification, critical reflection and self-realization". Moreover for Mackenzie and Stoljar (2000) and their collaborators, the subject-self, conceived with capacities for agency and action in a dynamic social world must be conceived relationally. Selves are both produced by certain socio-historical conditions and agentically act upon those conditions. They are neither ineluctably determined nor asocial free agents. Instead, these relational selves embedded in collectivities of social relationships, are conceived of as acting in and negotiating with those relationships and collectivities. Acting on relational-self interest and responsibility means also acting on collective interest and responsibility. This effort to theorize a collective model of the agentic, yet delimited and responsible self offers important conceptions not only for contemporary philosophy debates but also for feminist visions and theorizations of organizations and their changes. Autonomy, conceived relationally, is an important notion for feminists to retain and use in making practical application of feminist ethical demands, whether drawn from eco-feminism or from other gender criticisms of conventional organizational practices.

Taking these insights to organizational theorizing opens ways for an innovative repositioning of current depictions of modernist, highly rational processes and economistic ends. Importantly, I suggest, a cautious and careful feminist re-theorization of autonomy as relational autonomy directs attention to social interdependency, while also opening spaces for appropriately self-reflective and self-directed action. This formulation offers an important reconceptualisation of the *homo economicus* rationale derived of Kantian and utilitarian philosophies embedded in modernist organization theory and governing conceptions of the range and direction

of individual action within organizations. Moreover, it also offers a further development beyond postmodern feminist critiques of organizational practices that have largely exclusively emphasized oppressive constrictions of gendered subjects and discursive subjectification of persons. The substantive point I stress here is that in replacing the Enlightenment conceit of the rational self-mastered autonomous individual with the totalizing subjectification of power-knowledge effects in the postmodern (non)subject, feminist postmodernism; like postmodernism generally, offered little way out of organizational constriction and hyper-rationalization. Indeed, during the last two decades, concurrent with the rise in popularity of postmodern organizational analysis, the widespread acceptance of the notion of the "human resource" (of the worker as rationalized, abstracted object of organizational/managerial utility) has largely escaped feminist attention, or unwittingly been endorsed by its theoretical acceptance of subjectification.

In contrast, the conceptions of both the eco-feminists and relational-autonomy theorists pose insightful alternative formulations from which practical action may be developed. Importantly, a more collective model of theorizing both self and organization broadens spheres of action, and of responsibility. These latter propose a practical path to organizational change, from theoretical criticism and reform, to altered organizational action of responsibility and eco-social situatedness.

Eco-feminism, relational autonomy and organizations

Conventional organization theory, founded in organization science, assumed the unquestioned rationalities and occlusions of modernist science. It assumed the realizability of the rational organization of production and exchange according to utilitarian rational economics and an unlimited ecosystemic capacity. The assumptions and rules of standard growth economics were typically carried over into organization theory and delimited the terrain of much organizational analysis. Accordingly, phenomena occluded by conventional modernist economics such as ecological interdependence, organizational analysts likewise excluded finitude and entropy from attention. The vast unintended and incalculable ecological effects of organizational activity remain scarcely addressed and effectively denied in organizational analysis. The important interventions of postmodern theory and methods to the modernist rationalities of organization greatly widened the spaces and trajectories of contestation and alternative formulation. But, as I have argued above, the embrace of postmodernist cultural theory must be tempered. Recognition of its inadequacies has inspired the search for further developments in thought and practice beyond postmodernism. The thought of eco-feminists and conceptions of relational subject agents in feminist philosophy offer rich resources for advanced organizational analysis.

A growing oppositional voice seeks a new ethics by which to reposition triumphant market economism in Western societies. There are, of course, many everyday social practices which both uphold modernist economic individualism as prevailing ethic, and which practice economic rationalism in an assumed limitless planetary environment. Production organizations are, though, at the forefront of these enactments of technocratic economic rationalities.

As eco-social theorists have argued, the forces and consequences of human activity in modernity are now beyond calculation and control. However, prospects for systemic transformation lie in reflexivity and delimitation. By "uncovering of the immanent

conflicts of institutions *still* programmed in terms of industrial society [a critical consciousness exposes what] previously appeared 'functional' and 'rational'" (Beck, 1996, pp. 33-4) as "a threat to life". Some intervention may yet be possible.

An eco-feminist, and relational autonomy ethics present a non-dichotomous reading of nature and culture. It requires recognition of the co-constitution of nature and culture and not the denial of one or the other, as is the tendency of modernist, and postmodernist thought. Moving beyond conventional modernist conceptions of organizations and coercive rationalities we can conceive of organizations as networks of action between and among agentic and delimited relational selves, and eco-social environments. MacKenzie and Stoljar's (2000) notions of relational autonomy point to collective models of both self and organizational responsibility. In this way we can imagine that particular and universal interests may coincide as well as conflict. Political action within these relationships, or networks of action, dynamically regulates trans-communal organizations and interests. That is, organization conceived as movement and as relationality broadens the scope of action beyond economic and instrumental rationalities – with which both modernist and (conventional) postmodernist theorizations have been predominantly concerned. Organizations conceived in this way may indeed undertake an "ecological inquisition" of their *raison d'être* and of their everyday practices as Beck *et al.* (1994) demands. Conceptions of agency and autonomy as always and necessarily relational propose possibilities for a reconfiguration of organizational practices within ethical relationships with the real planetary world.

An ethic of this character recognizes simultaneously the intrinsic moral value of the natural world of which humans are irreducibly composite, and the practical imperative of sustaining mutually dependent resources necessary for basic human, and non-human, needs in future generations. This endeavour bespeaks a new, situated eco-humanism in which human activity is located in an ecology and cosmology of relationships. For organizations, an ethic beyond modernist capitalist productivism, inspired by eco-feminism and relational subject selves may revitalize the domain of human work, of labour, skill, affective and psychic relations of work, and delimit organizational power and instrumentality.

Notes

1. A full discussion of these developments may be found, for instance, in Casey (2002).

2. See, for instance, Gherardi (2003) for a review of earlier feminist efforts in organization studies.

3. Note, for instance, Fergusson's (1984) early Foucaultian-influenced work which drew on Foucault's linguistic structuralism while trying to reject his elision of resistance by people in everyday life.

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Diversity writ large

Forging the link between diverse people and diverse organisational possibilities

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Abstract *Both postmodernism and corporate culturalism, each in distinctly different ways, have had the effect of suppressing links between diverse populations and identity politics in regards to the work environment. For example, the "politics of difference" debates of the 1980s began to take on ominous developments in the 1990s with the dispersal of multiple identity characteristics into a fragmented morass. In turn, personal diversity attributes have been collapsed into the agenda of corporate cultural cloning such that an individual's presentation of self is expected to conform to malestream managerial characterisations. However, there is evidence of contradictory impulses associated with these events, which provides space to envisage a contemporary form of community-orientated activism that avoids the dilemmas of overly disparate difference approaches and narrowly prescribed models of subjectivity. This article describes how such a committed social movement politic might be operationalised in organisational/teaching contexts. The objective is to demonstrate the relevance of poststructural feminist ideas of communities of practice and notions of relationalism as a substantial charter for enriching organisational life. Ironically, in the current "new economy" environment, the discourse of management itself provides a means for such an endeavour to be legitimated. The article addresses the crucial factors required to achieve this substantive change process via expanded notions of difference, diversity and hybridity.*

Identification inhabits, organizes, instantiates identity. It operates as a mark of self-difference, opening up a space for the self to relate to itself as a self, a self that is perpetually other ... Identification is, from the beginning, a question of *relations*, of self to other, subject to object, inside to outside (Fuss, 1995, pp. 2-3, emphasis added).

The network economy: ethical diverse communities

Due to increasing competition in the global marketplace and changes in productive technology, a shift in focus from quantity to quality has employers seeking heightened levels of commitment from their employees. Articulated through a post-Fordist discourse, organisations attempt to construct a "new times" workplace with the expectation that self-actualised workers will provide the company with the requisite market edge. A form of mutualism is sought, where both employers and employees share an ethic of care and sense of responsibility in relation to their working relationships: reintroducing a pre-modern "moral" basis to the employment contract. A raft of management literature refers to companies attempting to build such a sense of community, frequently framed as "a postmodern spiritual future for work". Recognition of difference, and a celebration of diversity in general, is said to be integral to this awakening of the importance of human identity and its relationship to identification. The implication is that the post-industrial context is one where culture

supersedes the machine as a central motif, guiding both working relationships and the global experience of market exchange.

Nevertheless, there is a growing body of research evidence that indicates this narrative construction remains at the level of rhetoric. The accompanying documentation of employee experience depicts a profoundly contrary lived reality (Thompson and Warhurst, 1998). A Foucaultian nightmare is sketched consisting of external and internally induced forms of hi-tech surveillance and draconian expectations of work output that signal a heightened model of managerial domination (Barker, 1993) rather than "Pomo Enlightenment". However, while the mutualist discourse is often depicted in the critical literature as merely reflecting a cynical exercise on the part of management, thinly shrouded in post-Fordist imagery , we need to be wary of constructing a one-dimensional narrative of the change process not least because it risks portraying managers as all-knowing rationalist masters. A contrasting postmodern depiction allows us to see the organisation as a site of contradiction and confusion, which inevitably limits management's capacity for intentional acts. Managers contribute to this state of chaos in the sense that, no matter how committed to an embodied approach they may be, their *modus operandi* continues to be drawn from decidedly "old times" rationalist modernist assumptions.

The flow-on results of this lack of awareness are that current management discourse acknowledges the complexity of contemporary work production processes yet continues to over-simplify workforce cultures (depicting the latter as sites of unanimity, for example). Harris and Ogbonna's (1998) research on the diversity of recounted organisational experience gives expression to this claim. They demonstrate that despite people at various levels of the organisation, and from different backgrounds, expressing feelings of profound differentiation and fragmentation, managers continue to assume a widespread uniformity of perspective. This means that the subject is constituted through a discursive knowledge/power matrix where, for the bulk of the organisational populus, aspects of personal identity are made invisible. Hence, despite expanding contextual demands for varied inputs, the possibilities for utilising the local knowledge of hybrid individuals is precluded by deeply embedded assimilationist preoccupations and processes. The material effects on the shop floor or corporate manor tend to be incorporation and/or levels of alienation.

The "new times" discourse has emerged at a time when the cultural identity of the workforce has become much more diverse. Globalisation has played a major role in facilitating the widespread movement of migrant groups across the globe. Australia, for example, has 25 per cent of its national population listed as foreign-born. The mass entry of women into the workforce over the last three decades has also contributed to a changing social demographic (Loden and Rosener, 1991). This means attempts to forge mutualist workplace cultures are all the more complicated due to the varied requirements of such a mix of people.

A number of organisations, under the new economy rubric, have responded to the explosion of hybridity by introducing managing diversity (MD) programmes; ostensibly to prevent discrimination on the basis of identity and capitalise on the prospects for innovatory input. The stated intention is to facilitate the flourishing of a distinctive plurality capability. The elements of diversity addressed encompass a range of human differences that occur across a given population, including gender, race, ethnicity, social class, physical capacity, sexual orientation, religion and age, etc.

However, given the prevalence of an entrenched reductionist mindset, companies tend to exhibit a superficial understanding of diversity issues which translates, in the application process, to a continuation of "old times" structuring (Poggio, 2000). This means that while managers' signal acceptance of employee diversity they continue to operate according to processes that presume homogeneity. For example, "the traditional able-bodied white male manager" (Agocs and Burr, 1996, p. 39) remains the norm around which everyday organisational practices are instituted and this reinforces the perception that diversity is still a distinct category of "Otherness". Diversity continues to be implicitly correlated with notions of foreignness; accepted as an outcome of global economic change, but eluded when it comes to substantive company profiling (exemplified by the token representation of diversity at leadership levels, for instance).

Moreover, the dominance of top-down corporate cultures, preoccupied with achieving consensus and uniformity in organisational practices and perceptions, suggests the legacy of containment significantly undermines the capacity for organisations to establish a robust diversity model. For instance, the affirmative aspect of the business approach to MD implies that a corporate culture can be readily manipulated and significantly changed in a short space of time. This overlooks the point that workplace cultures are deeply embedded, reflecting their distinctive historical and sociological location, among other factors. Consequently, despite the post-Fordist call for managers to adopt Macgregor's "Theory Y" type trust relationships, in practice autocratic "Theory X" principles continue to reign. Indeed the technocratic revolution has further fuelled forms of ontological reductionism through attempts at accountability measures.

The role of literary reductionism

Mirroring the workplace, much of the management literature covering aspects of social identity (e.g. organisational culture, HRM, HRD) adopts a similarly reductive, categorical approach where the unit of analysis is treated as unified whether referring to assumed characteristics of individuals, particular groups, or distinctive differences between groups. In the organisational culture field for example, stated differences tend to be generalised to particular cultures such that whole populations are depicted according to narrow sets of stereotypical traits (Kirton and Greene, 2000). Hoffstede's (1994) research, considered seminal in this field, reveals this modernist preoccupation with prescribing categories of difference. The cultures analysed figure as integrated wholes represented by distinctive sets of shared characteristics that are taken to be objectively observable. By overly predetermining the relationship between the individual and the particular group in this way variance within groups remains neglected. The crosscutting elements of identity that relate to differentiated subjective experiences are thus eliminated (Gherardi and Poggio, 2001).

And in the HRM area, individual and groups differences are confined to a limited range of deterministically coded, personality traits that in turn become reified as static behaviourist categories. Rather than the current organisational climate alleviating these psychologically reductionist trends, the introduction of procedures like performance assessment criteria reflect ever more narrowly framed mechanistic ways of implementing these ideas in practice.

The culture of unitarism and assimilation is also inadvertently sustained in much of the literature that situates itself as resistant to the status quo (Chemers et al, 1995). This is because the "business case" model is often unproblematically adopted as a neutral discourse from which to expand inclusion principles and practices. Hence the discourse directly refers to exploiting the presence of diversity to serve the needs of the organisation. Since the argument centres on organisational efficiencies, references to human rights as an integral element in a successful change process remain absent.

The preceding analysis indicates therefore that a distinct disjuncture exists between post-Fordist depictions of the achievements of the new economy and current organisational life. This is despite the genuine desire of many managers to develop their industry along the lines of a social responsibility ethic. I believe it is this culture of instrumentalism that prevents organisations from making the great leap forward from confining to celebrating diversity. In the contemporary global environment this leads to a conundrum as organisations themselves are called upon to develop diverse ways of behaving. For example, the emphasis on quality in relation to customer service means that companies need to form networks with their service suppliers and former rivals in order to survive in world markets. This type of postmodern relationship building requires a level of strategic flexibility to operate collaboratively in certain contexts and competitively in others. If the prevailing reductionist mindset, and mode of functioning, continues organisations will struggle to cope with this ambiguous "new times" diversity environment.

Introducing "relational" plurality

One way a broader appreciative perspective could be developed is for managers at all levels to recognise that operating in terms of a diversity ethic (both in terms of organisational and personnel strategy) is not a neutral process and will require engagement with deep-seated, challenging issues (Kramar, 2001). This is where those of us involved in educating middle and senior managers can play a facilitative role, demonstrating the value of their adopting a more analytically reflective, critical, take on their own managerial processes. As well as enabling MBA and DBA students to gain insight into their own experiential learning through training in "reflexivity" practice (Cunliffe, 2002), a poststructural feminist (PSF) "relational" perspective allows managers to positively encounter organisational ambiguity by seeing beyond the confines of logocentric modes of representation. Having taught both groups application of these ideas myself, I find students report a sense of liberation in being able to name the type of complexity they already experience in their daily organisational lives.

A PSF relational mode of analysis aids comprehension that dualist fixations like sameness/difference are connected to exclusive/inclusive tensions, which in turn are related to centre/margin distinctions. This bipolar sense-making process is underpinned by accompanying, primacy versus subordinate, value positions. Relating these issues to power processes through examples of dualistic gendered perceptions where man/woman stands for: rational/emotional, strong/weak, etc, enables classroom participants to envisage moving beyond oppositional thinking. I utilise relational understandings to demonstrate the interwoven aspects of concepts, drawing out aspects of plurality, and potential for flexibility, by revealing: "what is

central in one context is marginal in another which is what makes it possible for us to change our perspective" (Phillips, 1992, p. 27).

Applying deconstructive analysis serves to break up the dualistic boxes revealing the presence of a repressed middle ground – signifying ambiguity, complexity and contradiction – indicating these lexicon absences reflect a predilection for control. Lesbian and gay differences epitomise such a middle ground; feared and excluded from conventional heterosexual gendered representations. The significance of such signification is illustrated by the numerous absences that negatively translate in the everyday lives of homosexuals (e.g. lack of parental/marital/property/rights, etc). Thus PSF analysts, wary of absolutes, have begun to practice "heterogeneity" in order to more appropriately represent the complexity of our lived experience. This does not emerge because of some:

> ... female talent for balancing marginality and affiliation, but [out of] moral and strategic necessity. [Since] the structures of discourse have boxed up sexual [and gender] difference...feminists [are wary] of both monolithic and dualistic thinking; of too great a trust in the article "the" and the conjunctions "either" and "or". Heterogeneous thinking prefers the article "a" and the conjunctions "both/and" (Stimpson, 1989, p. 30).

The both/and connotation means that previously excluded characteristics can be acknowledged and recognised as "relationally" constructed. Hence, while gender may be constituted in terms of a male/female binary, our lived experience of social identity is much more continuously fluid and interrelated. As Scott (1994, p. 1074) frames it: "man and woman are at once empty and overflowing categories. Empty because they have no ultimate, transcendent meaning. Overflowing because even when they appear to be fixed, they still contain within them alternative, denied, or suppressed definitions'.

Rather than analysing diversity in fixed, categorical terms, aspects of social identity are thus seen as relationally determined and contextually, rather than naturally, bound. Being essentially unstable categories of differance they break their artificially imposed boundaries. A more relational awareness not only enables us to recognise that perceptions of difference and sameness are socially constructed according to particular sets of restrictive assumptions, it also facilitates the grounding of a diversity agenda in realistically achievable ways as I illustrate in the latter section of the paper.

Understandings the essential relatedness of sameness *and* difference in terms of organisational diversity, provides the basis for an exciting array of "participative empowerment" possibilities. At a time of unprecedented human mobility, PSF provides a unique opportunity to proffer an alternative scenario by reframing the business case for diversity via a wider "civic communitarian" vision based on the recognition of our mutual interdependencies. To this end, in my teaching praxis I attempt to move beyond the limits of the commodified human resource mentality. In its place we study a model of social entrepreneurship based on current human relations/hip realities and discuss their expanded potential. This mirrors the spirit Diana Fuss outlines:

> ... [by]identifying ourselves as members of [various] communities we find tools...the images and vocabularies, with which we can imagine a world other than the one suited to the interests of bourgeois individualism ... [T]he recognition that each one of us is radically plural makes alternative discourses an open possibility (cited in Haber, 1994, p. 121).

If identity is not simply a unitary phenomenon but instead is relationally determined than the notion of "relationships" becomes central to our understanding of how new economy organisations can function in terms of a flexible communi*ties* model. Haber's (1994) anti-idealist, poststructuralist idea of community provides such an expansive model in which she depicts subjects and communities as interdependent selves, as "subjects-in-community" albeit in a state of flux. This process model of community takes us beyond the modernist static depictions of organisational community I have outlined as persisting today where plurality is suppressed. The praxis model I advocate is best represented as "relational diversity" (RD), rather than "managed diversity" (MD), because the former is capable of providing a route to mutually productive outcomes.

To begin this process, however, we need to engage with our capacity for expansive relational imagination rather than instrumental rationalisations. As Rorty states, "it is imagination rather than reason that acts to extend our sensibilities and our understanding of others" (cited in Phillip, 1992, p. 15). In this regard, a complete rethink of the MD mindset, and managing process, is required in order to develop an appreciative form of management appropriate to the twenty-first century work environment. An RD model could allow managers to effectively negotiate this process and in so doing learn how to engage in internal and external relationships in uniquely productive ways. The novel fashion that PSF celebrates difference, bridging the divide by acknowledging the *and/both* words to identify the complexity of social phenomena, is a useful starting point.

Setting the scene for the new economy "hybrid" organisation

The two quotes: "Venus in a Mars world" and "Agree and commit, or disagree and commit", were recently voiced respectively by an EOWA director and an Australian CEO (heading a leading international human resources firm). They serve as telling comments on the tensions organisations suppress when attempting to manage diverse work populations on the grounds of a reductionist consensus model. As I indicated, despite the increasingly dynamic nature of the changing climate, the "culture of assimilationism" has prevented managers from adequately confronting these issues. The dilemma revolves around the desire for unity of purpose to achieve output objectives *and* at the same time embrace divergent viewpoints regarding input processes to meet new economy demands for flexibility and innovation. An RD perspective could facilitate the necessary "flexibility of mind" currently foreign to most organisations. Such an appreciation would allow managers to encounter the intersections between population diversity, employment relationships, evolving organisational contexts *and/as* strategic objectives. This can only occur however, if management is prepared to suspend adherence to taken-for-granted norms and associated practices and enter a brave new "flexible learning" environment.

The global market context is already placing such demands on managers. There is growing evidence of new organisational forms emerging involving operational decentralisation and the growth of relationship building. Kramar (2001, p. 5) outlines four evolving scenarios related to these developments encompassing: "virtual countries, enterprise webs, shifting networks and network alliances". While each grouping represents a unique formation they also share a number of common characteristics. For example, communication and commerce largely take place

electronically, involving a whole range of stakeholders (including employees, suppliers, customers and community citizens). The *modus operandi* is fast, flexible, flat, internationally orientated and decidedly postmodern. It requires intricate processes of vertical and horizontal integration with the firm playing a much more enveloping role in employees' lives, leading to a breakdown in the boundaries between public *and* private terrains. As well as working in a home environment from time to time, in other situations employees will function in virtual teams with participants focused on innovatory practise. This will require both risk-taking behaviours *and*long-term conceptualising. Organisations will operate through global supply chains/brands but instead of being organised around a strong physical locale they will constantly form *and* reform as evolving webs of knowledge in different environs[1].

Difference in such environments becomes an all-pervasive motif as different people encounter "different" relationships with the company, exhibit "different" personal characteristics, and operate in "different" physical locations. Their work contracts will also be different representing flexible employment exchanges rather than conventional contracts, often executed on a short-term basis. Managing people under such insecure and ephemeral fluid arrangements requires the type of rethink of the managing and leading people role I have outlined. An RD perspective would serve as an organising principle and set of practices, based on the recognition that diversity and flexibility go hand-in-hand. For example, the management of human resources will need to be flexible to meet the changing needs of the individual's operating in such a dynamic environment. In turn adopting a RD contextually determined perspective, managers themselves will become chameleon-like, acting as "administrative expert, strategic partner, change agent, [or] employee champion", depending on the needs of the moment (Kramar, 2002, p. 12).

As different people will have differing psychological contracts and expectations of the organisation, the challenge of reconciling the proliferation of different organisational cultures and employment practices will be dependent on a network of managerial strategies. Given the difficulty of retaining traditional notions of employer-employee loyalty under these circumstances, the creation of personalised quality relationships will be crucial. The provision of a range of learning opportunities will also be necessary to allow individuals to work effectively on short-term projects and the like. These measures could provide the necessary ingredient to ensure employees felt valued and able to cope with such unstable conditions. Central to this change process, as indicated, is the replacement of the instrumental "human resource" utility approach with a more appreciative "human relations" (RD) model where the individual is seen as a potential strategic partner in an evolving "community of practice" (Leidtka, 1999).

A "subjects-in-community" learning model
The pressures to survive in a knowledge driven economy mean that organisations need to become learning institutions that value all manner of input including individual self-knowledge and social acumen, as well as tacit know-how and technological expertise. Following this approach, the organisation would function as a "network" where different people, exhibiting a range of talents, would interact across a number of different dimensions rather than remain confined to one functional unit. Taking teamwork to its logical conclusion, traditional notions of leadership would change, as

the role would fall to different people in different contexts depending on their specific skill-sets. Such a partnership-orientated model would allow the tension between collaboration *and* competition to work as a stimulus to goal orientated achievements. In building this type of intellectual *and* emotional community, organisations could gain employee commitment *and* retain their intellectual capital. Dedication to this relationship-centred approach would ensure that, in moving in and out of different projects, employees brought added value to the organisation. The experience gained from work undertaken in different contexts would allow that value to increase over time. Operationalised as an expansive frame of reference, such a strategic form of RD would include a range of stakeholders (e.g. contractors, shareholders, consultants, suppliers, and even customers)[2].

Kramar's depiction of impending organisational futures has given me licence to imagine how a relational, PSF collegial model of diversity could provide mutual benefits *and*, at the same time, counteract the legacy of instrumental reductionism. PSF serves as a unique point of view because of its attention to the intricate workings of the post-industrial environment and its complex depictions of postmodern identity. In this regard, their dynamic portrayals of the processes that affect social identity allows for explorations of intra-group and inter-group differences. A PSF mindset, would allow the popular organisational trend, referred to earlier, to measure people's performance capabilities according to narrow instrumental tools to be abandoned in favour of recognising the central role contextual and relational factors play in determining human potential. This would mean discarding problematic beliefs in the power of prescriptive character "prediction". Equally, organisational practices could be interrogated to reveal their underlying contextual values *and* relationship to prospective outcomes; such an exploration would draw out the necessary distinction between "corporate" and "organisational" culture for instance[3].

Integrating metacapabilities

The nature of organisational learning called for here is "participation in the doing, the sharing of perspectives about the doing itself, and the mutual development of both the individual and the collective's capabilities in the process" (Liedtka, 1999, p. 4). This approach allows individuals to adopt new ways of seeing and being that reflect an integrated, yet broad-ranging mindset that moves away from the tendency to treat components of an organisation as discreet. Liedtka (1999, p. 3) names the outcomes as "metacapabilities" represented by:

> ... bundles of skills and knowledge that are process driven, [which] defy the piecemeal implementation of individual best practices. They cannot be grafted, one behaviour at a time, onto existing ways of thinking and behaving. Instead they rely on a larger context, in which core values and processes align in self-sustaining and mutually supportive ways.

The emphasis is on mutualism (*both*) because the social interaction of the organisational community, not simply individual intellectual/manual skills, produces metacapabilities. This model clearly has a direct overlap with RD principles. The important ingredient is a "process-orientated" approach. This is a way of representing organisational activities as dynamic, hybrid and interrelated, rather than static and isolated. Overall then this relationship perspective would not only manage human interactions in a more appropriate "new economy" manner, but also encompass a

strategic appraisal of macro structural and environmental factors. Building specific capabilities according to the RD approach would therefore utilise the talents of individuals, render the organisation more adaptable to change, and no doubt add superior value to its customers.

Unlike the traditional organisational desire to achieve company consensus, the RD model takes its lead from the industry quote made by an Australian CEO referred to earlier, recognising that a certain level of conflict is inevitable *and* indeed healthy *and* provides an impulse for creativity, if wisely channelled. It also incorporates an awareness related to the second quote, voiced by the EOWA director, regarding the point that organisations are marked by the presence of a hybrid range of differences. The most productive tactic to address these tensions is to allow the different impulses to lie alongside each other rather than be repressed. Mary Follett and IDEO both identify the vitality that can emerge from the willingness to embrace the type of diversity that moves beyond the mechanistic exclusions of industrialism, and the singular post-industrial culture inclusions, to embrace the pluralistic *and/both* insignia.

Kramar's narrative confirms that change processes in the global era are *ad hoc*, unstable and accelerating. The scenario outlined above suggests that the "emotional capital" developed under the RD model will go some way to shoring the company up against some of the negative aspects of these trends. The learning framework adopted would emphasise celebrating not simply managing diversity, as in a dynamically changing context, it would be important for all employees (and the organisation as a whole) to exhibit a culturally diverse global outlook. RD could provide the stimulus for the ongoing process of reflection, refinement, and ever increasing learning required to achieve this. Training all organisational participants to think and acting diversely and interrogate their taken-for-granted assumptions becomes an imperative in this type of context. This would involve applying learning theory ideas that refer to "communities of practice" as the necessary infrastructure to allow organisational diversity to flourish. The intention would be to integrate elements of participative leadership, forms of workplace collaboration, strategic thinking and quality management to produce the kinds of skill and knowledge that lead to metacapabilities. Valuing diverse, hybrid personal identities would thus serve as part of a wider agenda to advance organisational flexibility where the diversity insignia stood as an organising principles by which the company lived and thrived[4]. Historically capitalism has been very effective at defeating resistant discourses by incorporating them into its reactionary impulses. Ironically, given the "new times" managerial discourse (outlined at the beginning of the paper) I believe there is now an opportunity for those of us who participate in communities committed to social movement transformation to do the incorporating into our own "diversity writ large" agendas.

Conclusion

In this paper I have attempted to illustrate how a "new times" democratic participation model might allow organisations to manage the work, market and community relationship imperative in innovative ways. Zuboff (1988) envisages a similar epistemological shift to that which I have outlined in her forthcoming text: *The Support Economy: Reinventing Capitalism?* In noting that capitalism reinvents itself from time to time in relation to changing consumerist conceptions of "the good life"[5], Zuboff claims a similar process is occurring today. She notes, however, that this revolution is

likely to look more like a social movement than a traditional organisational change programme. Zuboff names this portentous new wave of wealth creation "distributed capitalism". Framing a business organisation as a relationally orientated, "community of practice", as I have been outlining, would facilitate this transformation and create a vibrant workplace community in the process.

Notes

1. Companies like the transnational industrial design company (IDEO) already mirror this scenario in their day-to-day operations. Staffs spend a good deal of time in "the field", consulting with various members of the public, researching the possible parameters of intended design projects. They also form (and reform the content of) specific on-site groups depending on the nature of the task at hand.

2. IDEO reflect this inclusive, "subjects-in-community", approach to product design, consulting with a range of communities on the viability of potential products. They specifically identify this as a "process" approach and name it ethnography. In coining the latter term, they reveal a sophisticated appreciation of the need to gain informal knowledge from a range of sources to ensure their products are innovative and appropriate for the end user. In-house, they operate via flexible collaborative processes, where individuals form *ad hoc* groups, made up of individuals from diverse knowledge bases (as well as engineers, they employ psychologists, linguists, and biologists) who interact without a designated leader. Management recognises that diversity is the key to innovation. In this regard, the vast range of design products they have produced thus far is testament to the unbounded capacity of human creativity.

3. The former represents the espoused, superficial, formally imposed, culture represented through mission statements and the like. "Organisational" culture in contrast reflects the everyday informal, continuously evolving, organic lived experience. The management of IDEO are well aware of these distinctions and utilise the spontaneity inherent in the latter sphere by ensuring that staff set their own norms in terms of working conditions. Management is well aware that their role is to provide the right "context" so that people can empower themselves by working through group negotiation processes (mirroring Mary Follett's ideas). Where IDEO is different from the likes of Barker's (1993) "concertive control" case study is, that employees are granted considerable scope for "power for" participative opportunities, not restricted to a "power over" representative capacity. This is because the entire project is underpinned by a philosophy/commitment to enlightened democratic processes as a way to achieve mutualist outcomes.

4. IDEO already lives this hybridity maxim and their financial and social success demonstrates its viability.

5. My deconstruction/reconstruction of the "consumer" is an encompassing one where the image of the predatory consumer is displaced by a conception of subjects as primarily social beings operating in dialogue with various communities (i.e. subjects-in-community).

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Book review

Mary P. Follett: Creating Democracy Transforming Management

Joan C. Tonn
Yale University Press
New Haven, CT and London
2003
623 pp.

As part of a post-modern journal edition, this review will deviate somewhat from the conventional focus on the composition of the text and the role of the author[1]. This is because I want to take a lead from Mary Follett and practise what she called "interpenetration", that is, my task will be to relate and integrate her ideas to the theme papers. Her distinctive reciprocal, networking model of management and group interaction, has profound resonance for this edition. The theme of "relatedness", albeit expressed in different forms, links all of the contributions. Mary's depictions of "reciprocal freeing" (relational diversity) effectively unite those ideas in her avant-garde, process model of participatory democracy, designed to maintain diversity within unity. Her groundbreaking "pragmatic intellectual" program for progressive change is as relevant today as it was revolutionary for her time.

However, Mary provides no prescriptive, "fads and fashions", guru blueprint, indeed she foreswore the notion of the all-knowing expert/leader. Rather, working through the complex associations that link the constructs of power, authority, leadership, conflict and coordination, in relation to group processes, she attempts to lay the necessary grounding from which individuals-in-community (subjects-in-community) might proactively build a vital and inspirational workplace environment by themselves. Reflecting her immensely varied experience, working with all manner of individuals in civic community associations, and later in management organisations, Mary's deliberations would be characterised as "grounded theory" today. Nonetheless, hers is no small-scale, domestic project, as she takes on the "big issues" that emerge from her ethical commitment to egalitarian principles.

The period was marked by a climate of fervent German idealist thought and British Fabian socialism. Mary demonstrated distinctive intellectual acumen by studying these ideas through the lens of a range of interdisciplinary social science perspectives, a most unusual approach for her day. Her tireless commitment to examining situations from a number of different angles is apparent in her capacity for integrative thought, and living systems principles. Critical of the reigning "adversarial individualism" (Darwin) and "atomistic rationalist" (modern science) prevailing philosophies, Mary turned to the evolving utilitarian philosophies (Locke, J.S. Mill) from which to develop an epistemological and ontological commitment to "relationalism" as a way of life.

While this entailed a belief in individuals working for the greater good, her interest was not in sublimation but rather in the potential for the group to represent more than the sum of its individual parts. This relates to her important management ideas regarding the creating of contexts to stimulate creativity through the "interpenetration" of intersected ideas.

The period of Mary's life (1868-1933) in many ways mirrors our "new times". The late nineteenth century was marked by economic recessions brought on by unregulated financial markets and lack of accountability by a conglomerate of industrial cartels. The result was tumultuous change, high rates of unemployment and general social deprivation. No doubt her first-hand experience, working with people in the community, enhanced her sense of moral conscience and intensified her interest in studying the necessary conditions to create economic and social prosperity. This immersion in her field of study not only ensured that her ideas had a "ivory basement" grounding but convinced her that these local inhabitants were capable of determining their own destiny in the right circumstances. To this end her life's work was given over to developing mutualist principles to ensure that employees, as potential entrepreneurial citizens, had the opportunity to work collaboratively with employers in an industrial democracy type environment. This is not to say that Mary held naive "corporate culture" consensus assumptions, as she acknowledged both structural inequality and the resulting distinctive sets of group interests. While she saw conflict in the workplace as inevitable, she believed it could be managed in productive ways if the "substance" of dissent was appropriately addressed.

In this regard, her social constructionist model of organisational self-governing reflects the affirming attributes missing from the self-regulating accountability-model prevalent today (see Eveline and Booth), such that individuals are encouraged to carve out their own value systems within designated group activities. Many of Mary's ideas are decidedly postmodern. She explicitly rejects a static resource model of power in favour of a Foucauldian, fluid notion of power, as situational, "relationally" constructed, dynamic and contested. In this regard, she points out that community spirit cannot be imposed but rather has to be grown organically, grounded in the work of relationship-building. Reflecting a contemporary "stewardship" theory of leadership, the traditional top-down, distanced manager is dispensed with in favour of a post-Fordist "coordinating" management role where leaders are very much a part of the team. Authority comes from function not hierarchy and leaders should be trained in commitment to community styles of organisation via a self-governing model (see Kramar in Bissett).

In many ways Mary is a model manager herself, committed and caring, in her institutional roles where she exhibited both "heart and brain" (p. 233), building empathy in an embodied fashion. Equally her theorising reflects the "unification of feeling, affecting, emotion, desire [and] aspiration". In terms of "managing diversity" Mary warns us, in relation to group processes, not to see difference as a problem, to confuse difference and antagonism, but to "maintain difference within unity, conflict within integration" (p. 270). She decries the tolerance aspect of "managing diversity" and develops principles of association based on the recognition that variety is the wellspring of life. In all of this she resists the essentialist and dualist conceptions of subjectivity much in the manner of this edition. This breadth of compassionate vision

and capacity for original, innovative thought, is surely remarkable in a woman who herself was not even granted the opportunity to vote until near the end her life.

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Note

1. This is a meticulously researched and written biography in which Joan Tonn not only manages to bring Mary Follett, as a person, to life on the page, but also vividly draws the reader into the period. We recognise that while we may have progressed technologically, in terms of "social wisdom" there is much to be learnt from past figures of such stature as Mary Follett. Hence, while daunted by the size of the book when it arrived in the mail, I soon found I could not put it down due to the richness of its imagery. I have taken the liberty of utilising the text for my own specific purpose because I have no doubt this book will be reviewed, in the traditional sense, time and time again, given its distinguished level of scholarship.