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THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF GENDER IN ORGANIZATIONS

Section 4 – Gender in Leadership and Management

Negative Intra-gender Relations between Women: Friendship, Competition and Female Misogyny

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*Negative Intra-gender Relations between Women: Friendship, Competition and Female
Misogyny*

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Introduction

Broadbridge and Simpson (2011) note that key aspects of gendered management and organization may be increasingly difficult to detect, arguing for research to “reveal” (Lewis and Simpson, 2010) hidden aspects of gender and the processes of concealment within norms, practices and values. Negative relations between women in organizations have been highlighted in different arenas since the 1960s (e.g. Abramson, 1975; Goldberg, 1968; Legge, 1987; Nicolson, 1996; Staines *et al.*, 1973) but remain under researched in management and organization studies. The following chapter offers an initial conceptual framework of women’s negative intra-gender relations in organizations. The framework aims to “reveal” some of the hidden aspects of gender and to contribute to a greater understanding of how gendered organizing contexts construct negative relations between women, and how such relations emerge through everyday organizing. In developing the framework we draw upon research from evolutionary and social psychology, sociology, management and organization studies. Specifically we draw upon women doing gender well (in congruence with sex category), while simultaneously doing gender differently (Mavin and Grandy, 2011); gendered contexts; homophily (Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1954) and homosociality (Gruenfeld and Tiedens, 2005); women’s intra-gender competition (Campbell, 2004) and processes of female misogyny (Mavin, 2006 a, b). Our contribution focuses upon revealing hidden forms of gender in action in organizations and highlights how gendered contexts and organizing processes which impact upon women’s experiences and advancement, are entangled with and facilitate, women’s social relationships at work.

To raise women's negative intra-relations at work can be to speak the unspeakable, almost a feminist taboo, which poses risk to the speaker(s). Drawing attention to women's negative intra-gender relations in organizations also risks the reduction of the problem to individual women, rather than problematizing social relations. Negative intra-gender relations between women at work was highlighted as a challenge to women's progress by Mavin (2006 a, b; 2008), contributing to the maintenance of the gendered status quo and hegemonic masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005) in organizations. We have argued elsewhere (Mavin and Williams, forthcoming; Mavin and Grandy, 2012; Mavin, 2008) that senior women in management and leadership face an oxymoron; they face expectations of positive solidarity behaviours from other women and requirements to take up the "women in management mantle" on behalf of women in the organization, whilst in parallel they are negatively evaluated for performing masculinities, through the use of Queen Bee label (Abramson, 1975; Staines *et al.*, 1973). Solidarity or sisterhood behaviours (Mavin, 2006a) between women are often seen as positive enablers. As numbers swell, it is suggested women are more likely to form allegiances, coalitions and affect the culture of the organization (Kanter, 1977). However, women perceived as Queen Bees are argued to disassociate themselves from their gender to survive and thrive in masculine work contexts (Derks *et al.*, 2011). Individual women as Queen Bees, are then positioned as "the problem;" perceived as unsupportive of other women and interpreted as attempting to hold on to power (Mavin, 2008). We contend that solidarity behaviour expectations and Queen Bee evaluations are examples of women's negative intra-gender relations facilitated within gendered contexts and gendered orders. Women's experiences are complex within these gendered contexts, including the chasm in social relations with other women which requires exploration (Mavin and Williams, forthcoming).

As women move into senior positions they disrupt gendered expectations and embedded gender stereotypes supporting associations of management as male, and men as managers and “bosses,” to which both men and *women* might negatively respond (Mavin, 2006 a, b). The possibility of negative intra-relations between women can also form in horizontal, as well as in vertical relationships between women at work (Gutek *et al.*, 1988). These problematic relations, possibly impacted by low gender demography (Ely, 1994), contribute to gendered organizations and constrain opportunities for women to be “otherwise”. Women’s intra-gender competition and processes of female misogyny (Mavin, 2006, a, b) are further aspects of social relations between women at work, so that contrary to gender stereotypes, women are often not friends and do not always cooperate or support each other, regardless of their hierarchical positioning. Rather women can be hostile towards women and in particular women in senior positions.

Chesler (2001: 2) contends women ‘...do not like, trust, respect or find their [other women] statements to be credible. To the extent that women are oppressed, we have also internalized the prevailing misogynist ideology which we uphold both in order to survive and in order to improve our own individual positions vis-à-vis all other women.’ Gutek *et al.* (1988) argue that women’s long history as a subordinate group has resulted in women learning to survive in a world structured by the dominant group’s definitions, rules, rewards and punishments, and therefore ‘the only realistic response of many women to such overwhelming institutionally based macro-manipulation is micro-manipulation, the use of interpersonal behaviours and practices to influence, if not control the balance of power’ (Lipman-Blumen, 1984: 30). However, theoretical development of this argument has been limited.

Organizations have been characterised by patterns of interaction which (whether intentionally and unintentionally formed) contribute to homogenous group structures, of which gender is one dimension (Gruenfeld and Tiedens, 2005). Such constructed patterns shore up social homogeneity and hierarchical structures and are argued to contribute to organizational members' sense of security (Camussi and Leccardi, 2005; Gruenfeld and Tiedens, 2005; Kanter, 1977). Homophily (the social process of friendship) (Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1954) and homosociality (a general orientation to associate with people like oneself) (Gruenfeld and Tiedens, 2005), have contributed to research investigating the gendered experiences of those in management positions through a focus upon social capital and network theory (e.g. Benschop, 2009). However a specific focus on friendship as a social process and intra-gender friendships has been lacking. In theorizing women's negative intra-gender relations, we draw upon an assumption that within work organizations and in senior positions, men experience greater opportunities for, and relationships with, others (men) and that this impacts positively on their experiences (Collinson and Hearn, 2005), whilst women's work place homophilous friendships and homosocial relations with other women, are problematic and remain under researched. Further, we integrate discussions on intra-gender competition and female misogyny (Mavin, 2006, a) to illuminate the difficulties that women may experience in accepting intra-gender differences. In turn, this highlights a greater understanding of how women negotiate organization and management within the prevailing patriarchal social order (Mavin, 2006 a, b; 2008).

The chapter begins by outlining our understanding of gender and gendered contexts facilitating negative relations between women. This is followed by a discussion of homophily (Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1954), homosociality (Gruenfeld and Tiedens, 2005), and women's intra-gender competition and female misogyny (Mavin, 2006 a, b). The conceptual

framework of women's negative intra-gender relations is then discussed and summarised, to consider how negative relations between women manifest and impact on women's potential, followed by emerging questions offered to frame future research.

Doing Gender Well and Differently

Doing gender well and differently is the first aspect for consideration within our conceptual framework, aimed to account for women's negative intra-relations in organizations. In outlining our position on gender, we build upon current research on doing gender well, or appropriately in congruence with sex category (Mavin and Grandy, 2011; 2012), and re-doing or undoing gender. We contend that gender can be done well and differently through simultaneous, multiple enactments of femininity and masculinity (Mavin and Grandy, 2011; 2012). In doing so, we agree with Billing (2011) who notes that gender is a fluid concept that shifts over time and place. However, we question optimistic claims that gender can ever be undone. Rather, undoing gender is really not undoing gender but re-doing or doing gender differently (Kelan, 2010; Messerschmidt, 2009; West and Zimmerman, 2009). We explicitly incorporate sex category into our understanding of doing gender, as we believe it cannot be ignored in experiences of doing gender. This does not mean that gender binaries cannot be challenged or unsettled, rather that the binary divide continues to constrain and restrict how men and women do gender.

Gender in organization studies research has progressed from essentialist perspectives which understand gender as the property of women and men manifested through ascribed individual traits, through to appreciating gender as a process. The distinction between physiological differences and social norms continues to be debated and problematized (Acker, 1992) whilst intersectional studies highlight the salience of other social categories for

gender relations, such as class and race (Acker, 2000; Holvino, 2010; Valentine, 2007). For us, rather than being the property of a person, gender is always being redefined and negotiated through every day practices and situations (Poggio, 2006). Gender is a ‘complex of socially guided perceptual and interactional and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine “natures”’ (West and Zimmerman, 1987: 126) and as such is a routine accomplishment (West and Zimmerman, 1987).

West and Zimmerman (1987) note the distinction between gender, sex categorization and sex. Sex is understood to be the application of biological criteria, which has been socially agreed upon. People are then placed in a sex category as sex criteria is applied to them, which is evaluated in everyday life through expectations of particular identificatory displays, indicating that one is a member of a particular sex. Such an understanding appreciates that when people do gender, they are already categorized by sex and gender is ‘the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one’s sex category’ (West and Zimmerman, 2002: 5). Gender is not a possession but something achieved, or accomplished through interaction, within particular social contexts, against behaviours understood to be appropriate for females or males (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Messerschmidt, 2009). Thus perceptions of a sex category are a facet of doing gender, as people are assessed as incumbents of a sex category. For example, as Messerschmidt (2009) argues, females who behave in ways which are considered to be masculine, may find their doing of gender is rejected as incongruent with their perceived sex category. In organizations, the use of the Queen Bee label can therefore be viewed as a sexist evaluation of senior women who perform masculinities (Mavin, 2008), whereby there is a perceived incongruence between the sex category of these ‘Queen Bees’ and how they enact leadership (e.g., agentic rather than communal style).

Underpinning much doing gender research is an assumed gender binary of male/female, masculinities/femininities (Kelan, 2010). One dimension in the development of organization studies gender research has been to question the salience of binary thinking, with arguments ranging from undoing gender to destabilizing the binary (Butler, 1990, 1999), although others argue that gender is done well (Mavin and Grandy, 2011; 2012), differently or re-done, rather than undone (Kelan, 2010; Messerschmidt, 2009; West and Zimmerman, 2009). Multiplicity is also argued to be one form of “breaking” the gender binary. Linstead and Pullen (2006) argue that the gender binary can be disrupted, as gender is a social and cultural practice which is performed and practised. Performances and practises which switch positions can disrupt the binary, as embodied experiences of gender are more fluid than a binary, more akin to a rhizome (Linstead and Pullen, 2006). Masculinity and femininity may therefore be co-present and simultaneous (Linstead and Pullen, 2006).

While we acknowledge the social process and fluidity of gender as individual subjectivities, we cannot deny the existence of the binary divide between men and women. As Gherardi (1996) argues, the dominant symbolic order of gender is of a binary of masculinity and femininity, which should be understood as a learnt understanding of social relations (Baxter and Hughes, 2004). As women’s intra-gender relations are under-researched, we contend that it is impossible to analyse gender in organizations without interrogating the binary divide against which men and women as groups, and as individuals, are evaluated in organizations. The gender binary therefore cannot be ignored in theory or in practice for women in organization, as it constrains and restricts how we do gender. At the same time, we contend that an approach that takes into account efforts to do gender well and differently (Mavin and Grandy, 2011; 2012), offers opportunities to recognize the fluid, contradictory and indefinite nature of doing gender. At the heart of this approach is

multiplicity, whereby women (or men) can do gender differently through simultaneous, multiple enactments of femininity and masculinity and as a result it may open up new possibilities for unsettling gender binaries over time.

Drawing from West and Zimmerman (1987) and Messerschmidt's (2009) assertion that individuals are held accountable to sex category in the doing of gender and our previous work (Mavin and Grandy, 2011; 2012), we delineate the conceptualization of not simply doing gender but 'doing gender well' or appropriately in congruence with sex category and explain doing gender well in this way:

For a woman to do gender well or appropriately, as evaluated against and accountable to her sex category, she performs expected feminine behavior through a body that is socially perceived to be female. For a man, to do gender well or appropriately, as evaluated against and accountable to his sex category, he performs expected masculine behavior, through a body that is socially perceived to be male. Thus there is congruence and balance between the perceived sex category and gender behavior, and femininity (or masculinity) is validated (Mavin and Grandy, 2011: 3-4).

In earlier work illustrative examples were provided of how women can do gender well and differently (Mavin and Grandy, 2011; 2012). Exotic dancers, for example, emphasize the sense of empowerment (independence, sexual exploration and freedom), exploitation (objectification), temporality (means to an end, ambitious goals), professionalism (strict rules) and moral compass (faithful partner) afforded through the work (Mavin and Grandy, 2011). While they do gender well, their efforts to legitimize and professionalize the work can be viewed as attempts, albeit those more aligned with masculinity, to simultaneously do

gender differently. In outlining our position of doing gender well and doing gender differently, we contend that individuals can perform, either consciously or subconsciously, exaggerated expressions of femininity (or masculinity) while simultaneously performing alternative expressions of femininity or masculinity (Mavin and Grandy, 2011; 2012). Further, women can also be perceived and evaluated by others as the “right” kind of feminine and the “wrong” kind of feminine (or masculine), even as part of simultaneous enactments of masculinity and femininity’ (Mavin and Grandy, 2012: 224).

Following this, our assumption is that women’s negative intra-gender relations are influenced in part, by women’s reactions to other women, when they do gender well and differently or are the “wrong kind of feminine” (Mavin and Grandy, 2012) according to gendered expectations and the context they are working within. Therefore while women may do gender well and differently simultaneously, thus opening up possibilities for disrupting the gender binary, this doing of gender takes place within gendered contexts and has implications for women’s intra-gender relations. The doing gender well and differently aspect of the conceptual framework is shown at Figure 1.

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Figure 1. Doing Gender Well and Differently (Mavin and Grandy, 2011; 2012)



Gendered Contexts: Implications for Women's Inter-Gender Relations

In conceptualising gendered contexts which facilitate women's negative intra-gender relations we focus upon four areas. Firstly, we focus on the double bind experienced by women in organizations, in that they are evaluated as women and as managers or workers. Secondly, we explore the possibility of decoupling evaluations of men and women from the gender binary. However we argue this can only be the case if everyone is able to decouple, not just some. Thirdly, we outline levels of masculine hegemony which require recognition in understanding social relations, and fourthly, we contend that patriarchy forms a backcloth to gendered contexts.

Research has demonstrated that work, and particularly management work, is historically and culturally associated with masculinity and men which has contributed to establishing a gendered order (Connell, 1987; Gherardi, 1994) in organizations. Within this order, the ideal worker, against whom all workers are assessed, is associated with masculinity and men (Acker, 1992). Men have been argued to feel comfortable with these prevailing attitudes and norms, as they perceive them as gender neutral (Simpson 1997). However, senior women in organizations face the double bind dilemma (Gherardi, 1994) of both expectations of behaviour appropriate to their perceived gender role, and behaviour expected of managers, the former associated with femininities, the latter with masculinities. This leads to complexity for women in negotiating organizing contexts (cf Eagly and Carli, 2007; Martin, 2006; Mavin, 2006 a, b; 2008), reflecting our position on doing gender and the challenges of gender contexts and hierarchies for women's relations.

Recent research suggests a fragmentation of gendered assumptions which contribute to a displacement of the male norm in organizing management in some contexts, for example Nordic countries (Billing, 2011). Billing's (2011) position is that women managers may experience congruence with the role of manager, if they have decoupled masculinities and the male body from competencies or values associated with management. Such opportunities arise through the erosion of strong gender divisions in expectations of management or leadership (Billing, 2011). However, whilst attempts may be made by some organizational members to decouple femininity and masculinity from particular behaviours and values, we contend that unless the majority or all organizational members 'buy into' this removal of gender divisions and change their expectations of others, in interaction, then people will continue to be accountable to normative gendered expectations that draw upon sex role categorisations (Messerschmidt, 2009). This reflects much doing gender research which continues to draw upon a gender binary (Kelan, 2010), even when attempting to undo it (Mavin and Grandy, 2011; 2012). Moreover, organizational members may also gender themselves in order to maintain a gender identity (Billing, 2011). This has implications for women and senior women in organizations as their intra-gender relations are enacted within this context.

Knights and Kerfoot (2004: 446), explain that masculinity shapes 'representational knowledge' through pervasive and tacit masculine discourses which structure behaviour in organizations and which can have deleterious effects for all organizational members. Disrupting and problematizing such forms of masculinity and repressive effects for all organizational members, requires the critique of background assumptions, (read masculine hegemony) which render such discourses intelligible (Knights and Kerfoot, 2004). Despite the pervasiveness of the masculine hegemony, it has been argued that in doing gender, there

is space for agency (Benschop, 2009; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005), in how organizational members relate to the gender socialization and patriarchy which contribute to structural restraints for members (Benschop, 2009). This reflects a view that gender is constructed at micro (everyday interactions), meso (organizational) and macro (societal) level, and macro level analysis alone cannot predict what occurs or how this is achieved at the meso or micro level of activities in organizations (Billing, 2011).

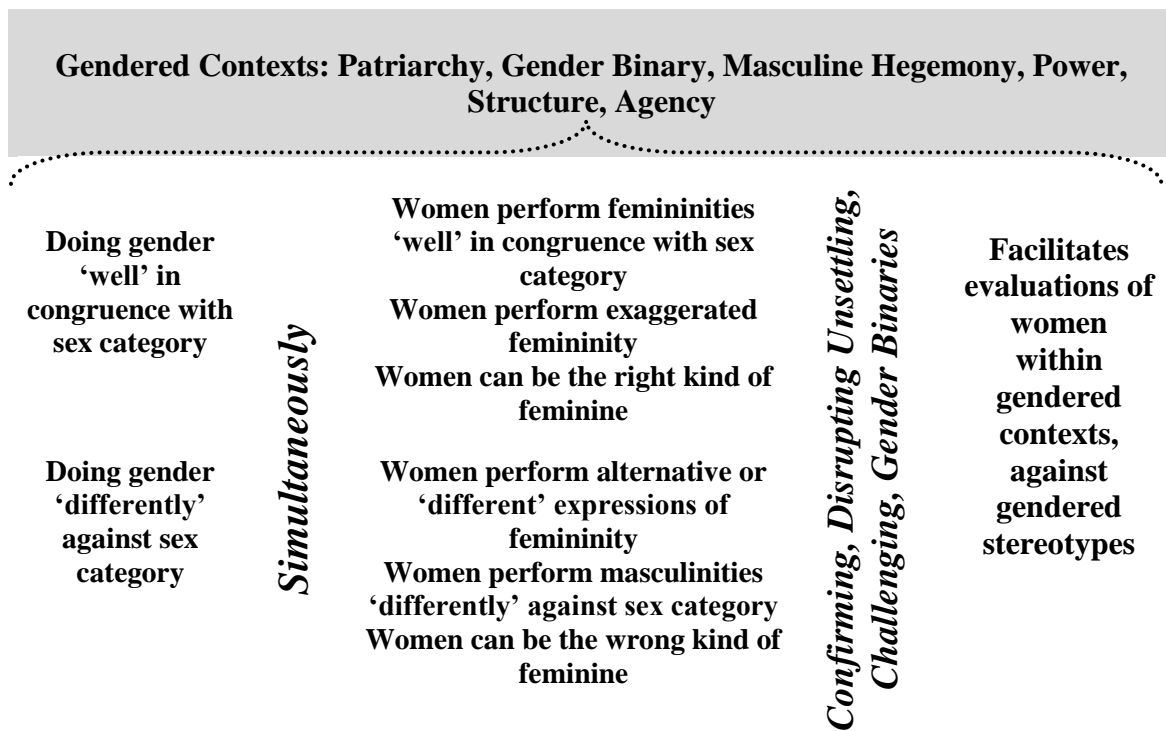
The concern with privileging macro level analysis at the expense of meso and micro level activities in the doing of gender also reflects a critique of patriarchy (see for example Walby, 1989) as an explanatory framework for all gendered relations in all contexts. Critiques of patriarchy contributed to a move in research away from assuming ahistorical or universal approaches (Walby, 1989), to suggest multiple hierarchies of relations between women and men. As Connell and Messerschmit (2005) note, there are geographies of masculinities which operate and can be analysed at and between the connections of global, regional and local levels. However, for us, patriarchy remains an important analytical category (Thornley and Thörnqvist, 2009); is useful to understand how ‘gender is implicated in all social processes’ (Acker, 1989: 239) and in the reproduction of women’s negated social positions. Patriarchy continues to be drawn upon to research different contexts in gender and organization literature (e.g. Dean, 2008; Ford and Harding, 2010). We contend that it is important to acknowledge the potential for multiplicity in local interactions, whilst also being cognizant of the broader social context in contributing to shaping these interactions.

Taken forward into our conceptual framework is an understanding that gendered organizational relations play out against gendered contexts and background assumptions, such as patriarchy, which contribute to maintaining assumptions of masculine hierarchical superiority (Knights and Kerfoot, 2004) in organizing. Within such broader contextual

influences, it is also acknowledged that the ambiguity and instability (Calás and Smircich, 1992) or fluidisation (Camussi and Leccardi, 2005) of gender roles at work requires research into gender relations to pay careful attention to the possibilities of being otherwise. For us, women at work may draw upon agency, as well as the possibilities of being otherwise: doing gender well and differently, enacting simultaneous masculinities and femininities. However, as we outlined earlier, women experience complexities, perform gender well and differently simultaneously but are evaluated by men and other women within gendered contexts, comprising patriarchy, masculine hegemony, the gender binary, and structures and hierarchies built upon masculine power. These gendered contexts shown at Figure 2, contribute to and shape, women’s intra-gender work relationships and work experiences.

< TAKE IN FIGURE 2 >

Figure 2. Gendered Contexts for Women’s Intra-Gender Relations



In moving to explore women's intra-gender relations within these contexts we look to the concepts of homophily and homosociality in organizations. Our assumptions are that women engage differently in these social processes, and/or, that men's friendships and homosociality are more powerful and embedded within patriarchal gendered contexts.

Homophily, Homosociality and Studies of Gender

In developing an initial conceptual framework to account for women's negative intra-gender relations, we draw upon Lazarsfeld and Merton's (1954) concept of homophily, as social processes of friendship. Lazarsfeld and Merton (1954: 65) suggested that early sociological studies of friendship which emphasised 'who makes friends with whom?' were supplemented by considering the role of attitudes, values and social status (such as race, sex, class, social standing) and the social processes which contribute to such friendship formation, alongside a concern for how friendships are maintained or disrupted. It is the '*processes* through which *social relations* interact with *cultural values* to produce diverse patterns of friendship' (Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1954: 20, original emphasis) which is of interest to women's intra-gender relations. It is recognised that different levels of homophily within particular contexts and cultural values can produce functional or dysfunctional consequences which subsequently affect friendship patterns (Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1954). Lazarsfeld and Merton (1954) suggest that dysfunctional or excessive levels of homophilous (friendship) relationships between men may have dysfunctional implications for an organization, for example, affecting recruitment decisions. However such intra-gender relations between women have received less attention.

When examining where, how and when friendships form, it becomes apparent that friendship is not purely an individual or dyadic affair (Eve, 2002), as there is configurational

logic and strong structuring at play, whereby ‘who becomes a friend seems to be determined not solely by individual attraction but above all by the potential for enriching and maintaining another relationship which is already important’ (Eve, 2002: 401), emphasising the structural importance of work place friendships and who associates with whom at work. Also in making some friendships we distance ourselves from others, ‘marking the social boundary of one’s separate identity’ (Eve, 2002: 401). This ‘marking off’ a social area or boundary is part of friendship processes e.g. ‘the despised colleagues which may constitute one of the main contents of the relationship via gossip, plotting, complaining, joking’, (Eve, 2002: 401). We argue that this ‘marking the social boundary’ process is also evident through expressions of women’s intra-gender competitive strategies and in processes of female misogyny between women and therefore is important to explore within women’s relations.

From a psychological perspective, stereotypes about same-sex friendships abound and are often contradictory (Calwell and Peplau, 1982). Tiger (1969) notes that male superiority in friendship reigns, with men better able than women to form lasting bonds with same-sex partners. Donelson and Gullahorn (1977) argued women are incapable of friendships and some women accept this view. Bell (1979), however argued that men’s friendships are superficial and lack the intimacy and emotion of women’s friendships, noting that the friendships of women are more frequent, significant and more interpersonally involved, than those commonly found amongst men. Moreover, there is an issue of defining the term friendship and how research participants understand the term, resulting in conflicting quantitative studies of how many same-sex friendships men and women have (Calwell and Peplau, 1982).

In terms of intimacy, research shows that women’s friendships are affectively richer: women are more likely to have intimate confidantes and more intimate friends than men, as

men have difficulty with emotional intimacy and are emotionally inexpressive, disclosing less and receiving less personal information than women (Calwell and Peplau, 1982). Here the male sex-role is considered as limiting emotional sharing in male-male relationships (David and Brannon, 1976; Pleck, 1976). Weiss and Lowenthal (1975) found that women emphasise reciprocity through help and support, while men emphasise similarity through shared experiences. This is supported by Calwell and Peplau (1982) who found women's friendships oriented towards personal sharing of information and men's friendships emphasising joint activities, 'because the male sex role restricts men's self-disclosure to other men' (Calwell and Peplau, 1982: 731). However this view, that men are unemotional, inexpressive, and impersonal, has been challenged by Keisling (2005) in his project on homosocial desire, who contends that men clearly form friendships and larger friendship groups, and must therefore manage to "connect" with one another personally and emotionally. Keisling (2005) relates men's friendship (homophily) to male solidarity and the "old boys club" (homosociality), as ways that men make themselves more attractive to other men (homosocial desire), arguing that these play a role in maintaining men's power as men connect with one another within a context of competition. Thus men's friendships are structurally powerful and contribute to homosociality (Gruenfeld and Tiedens, 2005), as the preference to associate with people like oneself.

Homosociality is therefore a further element to consider in terms of women's intra-gender relations within gendered contexts of organizations. Homosociality has informed the broader gender literature by focussing upon men, masculinities and male homosociality, exploring how men in management reproduce masculine hegemony (including misogynistic attitudes such as the subjugation of women) (Gregory, 2009), which arguably perpetuates masculine work cultures (Bird, 1996). Homosociality has been positioned as a practice

(Collinson and Hearn, 1996) or enactment (Worts *et al.*, 2007) of masculinity, recognised to shape organizing norms and performance criteria. Homosociality is understood to be “done” in two key ways in senior management, ‘redefining competence and doing hierarchy, resulting in a preference for certain men and the exclusion of women’ (Holgersson, 2012: 1). This is identified as an unreflexive preference of men in organizations, so that homosociality and gender discrimination are two sides of the same coin (Holgersson, 2012).

Thus men’s homosociality is acknowledged to be pervasive and instrumental in maintaining power in organizations but the intimacy and emotional basis of their friendships is contested. Women’s homophily in general is seen as more intimate and emotional, but their homosociality and instrumentality in work organizations is less powerful. We contend that these intra-gender relations require further research.

Wider network studies offer additional insights into how homophily has been considered. For example, McPherson *et al.* ’s (2001) review of network studies, sex and gender suggests that high levels of occupational segregation contributes to minority members networks being more heterophilous than majority members, which are characterised by homophilous relations, the latter more so around friendship and support. This suggests levels of homophily are increased by majority member status (McPherson *et al.*, 2001). Further research suggests that senior women in organizations may have homophilous preferences or affiliations (Cohen and Huffman, 2007), as women may seek out other women to network with (Ibarra, 1997). However (numerical) constraints of available socially similar others may limit the development of such relations (Ibarra, 1992). Women may also experience problems in maintaining network relations simultaneously, with both men at their own level and lower status women (Ibarra, 1997). Ely (1994) similarly argues demography effects relations between women, drawing a distinction between sex-integrated organizations (where there is a

perception of a permeable boundary to top positions) and male-dominated organizations (a low number of women in senior positions). Beckman and Philips' (2005) study outlines how women in senior high status positions in law firms attract clients from women led organizations. This suggests that at a senior level and with a high status role, women, even when in a minority, may achieve positive intra-gender relations with similar (senior) others (Beckman and Philips, 2005), albeit with women from outside their organizations. However we question the extent to which such homophilous relations can exist between women and how they contribute to women's homosociality within gendered contexts.

In reviewing management and organizational studies research, the literature on homophily has primarily focused on gendered networks and network theory, to identify women's location, and differences between women and men, in social networks. Examples include: women's limited access to networks (Kark and Waismel-Manor, 2005), women's access and contribution to networks for knowledge creation (Durbin, 2011), and Benschop's (2009) call for a focus upon networking practices rather than network positions. However, network literature overemphasises homosociality and under emphasises friendship, drawing less upon how Lazarsfeld and Merton (1954) conceptualise homophily as social processes of friendship. Durbin (2011) for example, suggests that homophily is shared identities or group affiliations, and Benschop (2009) similarly emphasises interaction and socialisation: both of which might be better understood as homosociality (seeking associations with those similar to self). Such narrow conceptualisations of homophily limit the possibilities of exploring women's experiences of friendship and intra-gender relations in organizations.

This conflation of homophily and homosociality reflects Gruenfeld and Tiedens (2005) research review of organizational preferences and homogeneity and their position that consistencies have been merged between homophily, homosociality, similarity-attraction

hypothesis and in-group favouritism. Gruenfeld and Tiedens (2005) argue that this merging of theories enables an appreciation that organizing is characterised by a desire to relate to others like oneself, and which subsequently shape patterns of social relations. We argue that while this characterisation of organizing is informative, important differences between the theories are lost. These differences are necessary to interrogate the under explored forms of gender in action and how organizing processes impact upon women's relations in organizations. Homophily, as Lazarsfeld and Merton (1954) conceptualise it, emphasises that patterns of social relations go beyond a desire to simply relate with similar others. This creates both distance and closeness between homophily and homosociality as important areas for future management and organization studies research. Historically Kanter (1977) that suggested homosocial reproduction was a key mechanism in organizations through which men in senior positions secure certainty, order and trust, by seeking association with similar others (men). This leads to the reproduction of characteristics men associate with themselves and seniority (read masculinities), as a form of social closure (Elliott and Smith, 2001) which contributes to reducing uncertainty faced by those in managerial positions (Kanter, 1977). While homosociality is an aspect of this process, Kanter (1977) highlights the dysfunction that occurs as an outcome of the need for trust, rather than an interest in or focus upon homophily as social processes of friendship.

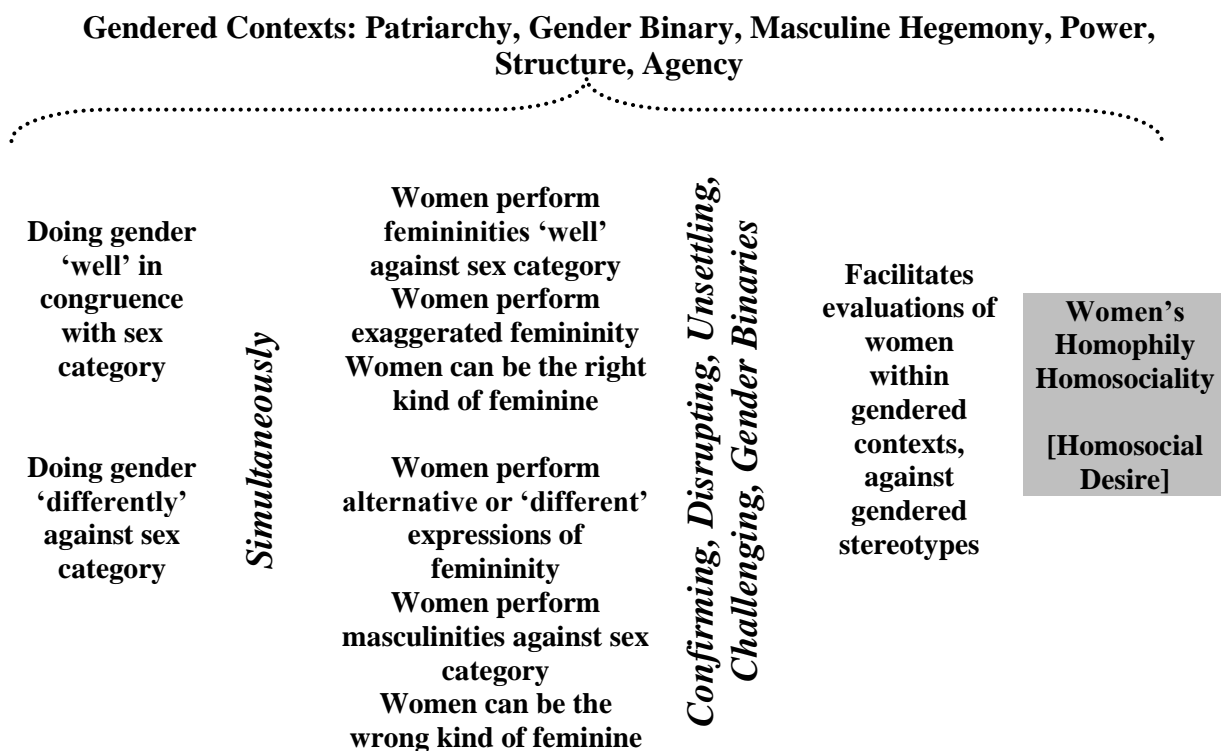
To summarise discussions so far, homophily is a concept drawn upon to understand gendered relations, however this has been limited to a focus on networks not friendship, as outlined in the sociological literature. Organizational research on homosociality to date has contributed insights into how masculinities are reproduced. There is an appreciation in the literature that intra-gender relations between men, whilst they may be competitive (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Keisling, 2005) and instrumental (Collinson and Hearn, 2005), are

characterised as involving degrees of cooperation, support and friendship (Collinson and Hearn, 2005), interconnected with homosocial desire (Keisling, 2005). These enactments of masculinity shape organizing norms and performance criteria, against which women are assessed and which contribute to the marginalization of women and their opportunities for positive intra-gender relations.

We contend that by considering homophily, as social processes of friendship, and homosociality, as a general orientation to associate with people like oneself, within the conceptual framework, we can reveal further hidden aspects of gender at work (shown at Figure 3). In noting men’s intra-gender relations as grounded in competition and cooperation, next we consider women’s intra-gender competition to further enhance our understandings of women’s negative intra-gender relations.

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Figure 3. Women’s Negative Intra-Gender Relations: Homophily, Homosociality & Homosocial Desire



Women's Intra-Gender Competition

Academic interest in female competition continues to grow (Campbell, 2004) in diverse fields of study, yet remains largely unexplored in gender, management and organization research. Taking an evolutionary psychology perspective, Campbell's (2004) sees women's competition as an inherent part of biological status, with women less willing to escalate competition to direct aggression arising from this biology, because natural selection favoured females who avoided danger of risking their safety or lives. Studies into men and women's competition by Tooke and Camire (1991) and Cashdan (1998), highlight how men competed with other men by exaggerating superiority, promiscuity, intensity and popularity, while women competed with other women by alterations to their appearance, 'so that attractiveness appears to be the currency of female competition even when no mention was made of what the competition is about' (Campbell, 2004: 19).

Campbell's (2004) position is that women usually compete for mates by emphasising public qualities valued by men (beauty and sexual exclusiveness) and by using less explicit ways of denigrating rivals (through gossip and stigmatization). In this way, 'women can compete without risking their lives through acts that ostracise, stigmatize and otherwise exclude others from social interaction without risking direct physical confrontation' (Campbell, 2004: 18). This indirect or relational aggression resulting from competition highlights the manipulation of social relationships through stigmatizing and exclusion (e.g. rumour and gossip) strategies which can have devastating effects upon the victim (Ahmad and Smith, 1994; Simmons, 2002). This indirect aggression can also be explained by gender role prescription; 'as women's direct aggression is an aberration from the female stereotype,

women may seek alternative and more acceptable means of expressing competition’ (Campbell, 2004: 19).

Millhausen and Herold, (1999) argue that gossip about sexual reputation (as a form of women’s competition) is not confined to “nice” middle class girls. As Laidler and Hunt (2001: 668) note from research with street gangs in deprived inner city areas, ‘we find gang girls spending a great deal of energy ‘bitching’ or casting doubt on others’ reputations. This cross-cultural process operates not only as a mechanism of social control, but also of distancing and confirming one’s own reputation.’ This intra-gender competitive strategy uses a similar process as homophily when “marking the social boundary” of friendship (Eve, 2002) raised earlier in the chapter. As Campbell (2004: 19) argues, ‘when we gossip we spread information that is damaging to the other’s reputation and so diminish his or her social standing. But the act of condemnation is also an act of self-promotion: one cannot credibly accuse a rival of behaviours that one engages in oneself’ (Campbell, 2004: 19). These competitive strategies between women can also be seen as processes of female misogyny (Mavin, 2006 a, b). Campbell (2004) notes that women’s concern with relative attractiveness might also result from the internalisation of patriarchal values, as well as from mate competition. Girls are argued to have come to ventriloquize patriarchal male attitudes about appropriate appearance and behaviour (Brown, 1998) resulting in “raging misogyny” (viewed here as female misogyny, Mavin, 2006a, b), as ‘many women compete over things they think men value, such as looking sexy... the most dangerous outcome of this is self-hatred: girls and women disparage themselves and disassociate from other females’ (Tanenbaum, 2002: 47). We extend this line of thinking to organization studies with an aim to “reveal,” and to problematize, how such women’s negative intra-gender relations play out in organizations.

From a sociological perspective, Connell (1987: 228) suggests women at work have experienced a different kind of regulation in the relationship with men which impacts upon their interaction with masculinities, as ‘women are subjected to direct comparison with men, while being disadvantaged in the comparison from the start’, through hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987), now understood as constructing a hierarchy of masculinities, where some remain more ‘socially central, or more associated with authority and social power’ (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 846), continues to shape gender relations, albeit recognising the dynamic nature of gender relations and practices at regional and local levels (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Connell (1987: 228) contends that in such circumstances some femininities, constructed in a dynamic relationship with hegemonic masculinities, may reject ‘withdrawal from competition as a formative personal strategy’ and engage in complexities of resistance, whilst other femininities which acquiesce to hegemonic masculinities continue to be produced; they comply with hegemonic masculinity and orientate around ‘accommodating the interests and desires of men’ (Connell, 1987: 183). The latter can be understood as “emphasized femininity,” a form of femininity performed for men, which exalts women as compliant, nurturing and empathic (Connell, 1987). According to Connell (1987) this emphasized femininity closes down the possibility of other femininities, of those ways of being which do not comply with hegemonic masculinity. This closing down of other ways of being can also shape women’s responses to other women in organizations. For example, response from women towards those women who reject emphasized femininity and engage in masculinities by “doing competition.” Drawing upon Mavin and Grandy’s (2011; 2012) doing gender well and differently simultaneously, permits opportunities for women to enact emphasized femininity (doing gender well), as well as masculinity (manifested through competition), simultaneously. However, the consequences

for women in this doing of gender however may be more subtle and dangerous than those experienced by men. As Starr (2001) notes when considering women's competition in organizations,

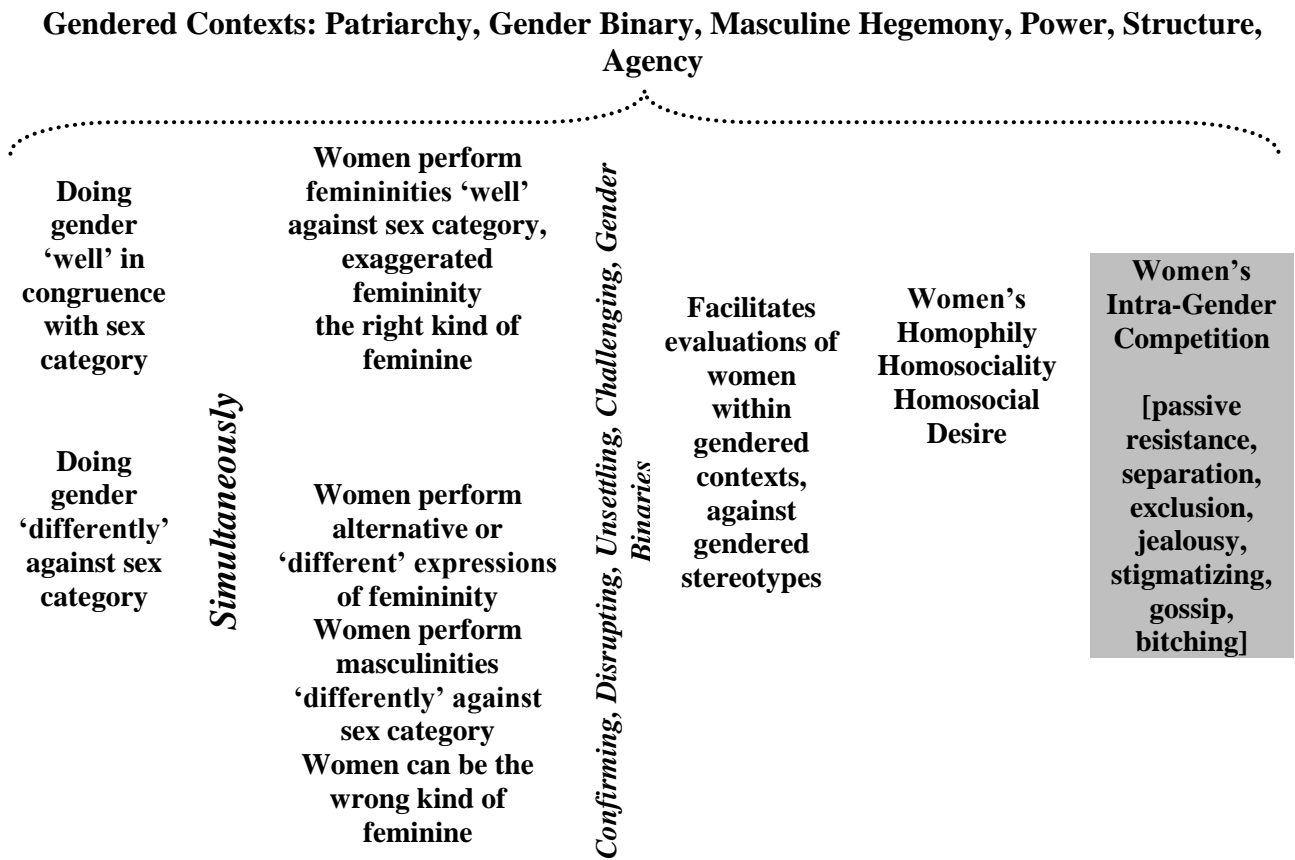
Competition between women may go deeper than professional rivalry, to include sub-conscious jealousy and competition based on age or appearance (attractiveness, weight, dress sense). This suggests that at times women may read each other's sexed bodies through men's eyes in sexual competition. At other times the perception of separation and competition is explained in work related terms through factors such as intellectual ability, professional connections, reputation, etc. Furthermore, unlike the more open forms of hostility exhibited by men, women observe that competition or opposition from women is more likely to manifest as passive resistance (Starr, 2001: 9).

Whilst competition for opportunities and career advancement (as scarce resources) is a challenge in both sex-integrated and male-dominated organizations, Ely (1994) argues that gendering in male-dominated organizations contributes to women's negative assessments of other women in management and leadership positions. When there is a scarcity of women in senior positions then other women are critical of senior women's 'credentials both as women and as [law] partners: women partners not only failed to be the kind of women on whom junior women could rely for support but failed as well to be the kind of partner whose authority junior women could respect' (Ely, 1994: 228). We have interpreted Ely's (1994) research as identifying negative intra-gender relations but from lower status to higher status women. However the research does not explore relations between women at different

structural levels (e.g. higher status to lower, varying horizontal relations). Nor does it explain how the broader social context contributes to these relations or how conscious or unconscious women are of their intra-gender behaviours as gendered practises.

We contend that discussions of intra-gender competition between women in organizations have been almost taboo and that being a “competitive woman” has been positioned as akin to being an “ambitious woman”; something you keep to yourself. Also, that there are unconscious and conscious competitive strategies, where women are unaware of the gendered contexts underpinning their actions and of the implications of their actions. Building upon Campbell’s (2004) call to further explore the evolutionary model of female competition for mates as scarce resources within alternatives sites, framed around conformity to culture-specific gender stereotypes and internalisation of patriarchal values, we integrate the nature of women’s intra-gender competition in organizations into the conceptual framework and question how this may manifest when the patriarchal hierarchy is disrupted by women. In doing, so we extend our conceptual framework of doing gender well and differently (Mavin and Grandy, 2011; 2012), organizational gendered contexts and the nature of women’s friendships and homosociality with other women, to include women’s intra-gender competition (see Figure 4). We now turn to the concept of female misogyny (Mavin, 2006 a, b) as the final element in our framework.

Figure 4. Women’s Negative Intra-Gender Relations: Women’s Intra-Gender Competition



Female Misogyny

Fotaki (2011) drawing upon Kristeva (1982), has highlighted that women occupy unstable and subordinated positions in the symbolic and are reminded of this by both men and women in organizations. Processes of female misogyny (Mavin, 2006, a, b) between women in organization are facilitated by gendered contexts and are a means by which women are reminded of their subordinate positions. Mavin (2006, a, b; 2008) conceptualised female misogyny from research into interactions between academic women and extended this when exploring negative behaviours and responses from women to other women in organization and management. Mavin's (2006, a, b; 2008) argument is that as women disturb the gendered

order by progressing up the managerial hierarchy or even by showing a desire to do so, they can invoke the wrath of both men *and* women, who are enculturated to associate power and management with masculinities and men. The gendered contexts of organizations and management and the prevalence of sex-role categorisations in assessing women are argued to contribute to the backdrop of relations between women (Mavin, 2008) yet they remain under researched in management and organization literatures. Women who respond negatively towards senior women who do not meet expectations of the gender binary e.g. through solidarity behaviour, are unaware of/fail to acknowledge, the complexities of the gendered organizing context and overly emphasise individual women's behaviour, or non-behaviour, as the root of the problem (Mavin, 2006 a, b; 2008). In doing so, women also contribute to the maintenance of the "individual woman as problem" and therefore the status quo in relation to gendered hierarchies in organizations. Research into the concept of female misogyny enables an exploration of the 'shadow side' of relations between women, constructed within gendered contexts (Mavin, 2008: 573). Female misogyny encapsulates the social processes, behaviours and activities women engage in, consciously or unconsciously, when they subjugate, undermine, exclude and stigmatize other women. Female misogyny can therefore be seen to encapsulate women's "violence" towards other women. Female misogyny, evident through interactions between women in organizations, results from a concern for, and possible threats to, established gendered hierarchies, which become struggles over destabilisation, change and/or maintenance of the gendered status quo. Women's workplace friendships and intra-gender competition also play a part in these struggles, as complex interlocking practices and processes (Acker, 2009) of women's intra-gender relations.

Processes of female misogyny therefore emerge from the complex way in which gender order is embedded and the underlying assumptions and behaviours which socially construct and impact upon everyday experiences for women in management. The significant issue which requires further research is the way in which the privileged gendered social order evident within management, encourages and exacerbates differences between women, in order to prevent opposition in the form of successful challenges and resulting change. This is not to point to orchestrated behaviours in that many women are not conscious of their negative behaviours towards other women, rather to identify and to challenge implicit gendered assumptions which foster difference and fragmentation, which is, after all, easier to dismiss than joint action (Mavin, 2006 a: 273).

Engagement in female misogyny is often an unconscious process, lacking in awareness of the gendered contexts which facilitate women's negative behaviour towards other women and of the damaging outcomes of such misogynistic behaviours. However, women's intra-gender "violence" can be constructed as horizontal and vertical aggression (Farrell, 2001) in organizations. We agree with Camussi and Leccardi's (2005) argument that is possible to see traces of misogyny in women's assessments of other women who are counter-stereotypical. Such responses are limiting for both organizations and women as they 'sanction the impossibility for women...of constructing a different condition' (Camussi and Leccardi, 2005: 135), which would allow for intra-gender differences *and* equality with men. Female misogyny (Mavin, 2006 a, b) is an alternative perspective on relations between women in organizations which considers the gendered contexts in which these negative

relations are co-constructed and a concept through which to further explore women's negative intra-gender relations in organizations.

Women's expressions of a desire for power and others' perceptions of this desire, work against women (Mavin, 2006 b), as such behaviours demonstrate that women are failing to live up to gendered feminine communal stereotypes associated with women generally (Okimoto and Brescoll, 2010). Okimoto and Brescoll (2010) suggest that backlash responses to women who seek power are not differentiated between men and women, supporting the argument that women also respond negatively via female misogyny to women who do not meet gendered expectations (Mavin, 2006 a, b). Rudman and Phelan (2008) suggest that women also respond negatively to other women when selecting partners for competitive tasks which had implications for their own success, and negatively to expressions of power by agentic women. They argue that this may be a form of unconscious self-oppression, so even women evaluated as competent, are perceived to be "socially unattractive" by other women (Rudman and Phelan, 2008). This social unattractiveness of women to other women, constrains potential for homosocial desire (Keisling, 2005) between women.

Farrell's (2001) study of relations between nurses suggests that women can act as gatekeepers to other women and such circumstances are characterised by expressions of horizontal aggression. Parks-Stamm *et al.*, (2008) argue women strategically reject successful women in male dominated roles to prevent unfavourable assessments of themselves, as successful women set a high benchmark for the assessment of other women within the organization. This argument supports a female misogyny interpretation of women's responses, as successful women are then a threat to 'the self' of other women (Parks-Stamm *et al.*, 2008: 242), who can respond negatively by distancing themselves from senior women, drawing upon prescriptive norms to position successful women as unlikeable 'norm violators'

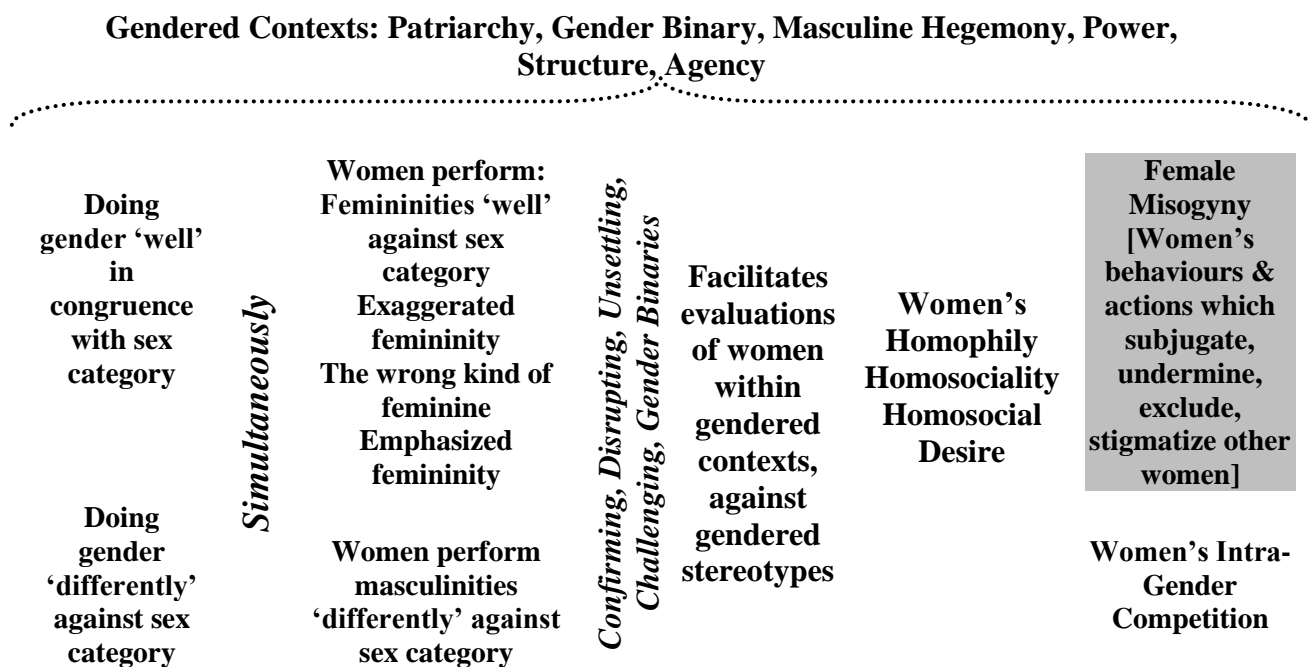
(Parks-Stamm *et al.*, 2008: 245). This rejection and distancing process as female misogyny, has parallels with “marking a boundary” in social processes of friendship (Eve, 2002) and stigmatizing and exclusion (e.g. rumour and gossip) strategies of female competition (Campbell, 2004). Such relational strategies and responses have significant implications for the possibility of women’s positive intra-gender relations.

Our assumption is that homophilous friendships and women’s positive intra-gender relations, including the ability to simultaneously compete and cooperate, particularly at different hierarchical levels, would be a positive cultural and structural enabler to women’s experiences and progress, as it has been for men. However Camussi and Leccardi (2005) suggest that the very fluidisation of socially sanctioned gender roles has also contributed to the levels of ambiguity and complexity in organizational members’ experience. As women move away from traditional sex-role expectations and into performing multiple gender roles (care-givers and competitive careerists), ‘structural ambiguity’ gives way to complexity and ‘fears and uncertainties,’ which construct space for socially shared prescriptive stereotypes to re-emerge as tools to re-establish order (Camussi and Leccardi, 2005: 115). For Camussi and Leccardi (2005: 116), who draw upon Mavin and Bryan’s (2003) work on female misogyny, this includes intra, as well as inter, gender expectations, ‘i.e. the ability to be women or men in different ways’, and difficulties in accepting intra-gender differences, which result in women aligning themselves with men in keeping other women in second place (Mavin, 2002). Integrating female misogyny into explorations of intra-gender relations between women enables a richer understanding of how women negotiate organization and management (Mavin, 2006 a, b; 2008). This requires consideration of female misogyny as interconnected with women’s intra-gender friendships, homosocial relations and competition, constructed and reproduced within the prevailing patriarchal social order (Mavin, 2006 b).

Therefore female misogyny offers a further contribution to our conceptual framework in enabling understanding of ‘the sociocultural constraints that continue to penalize women’ (Camussi and Leccardi, 2005: 120).

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Figure 5. Women’s Negative Intra-Gender Relations: Female Misogyny



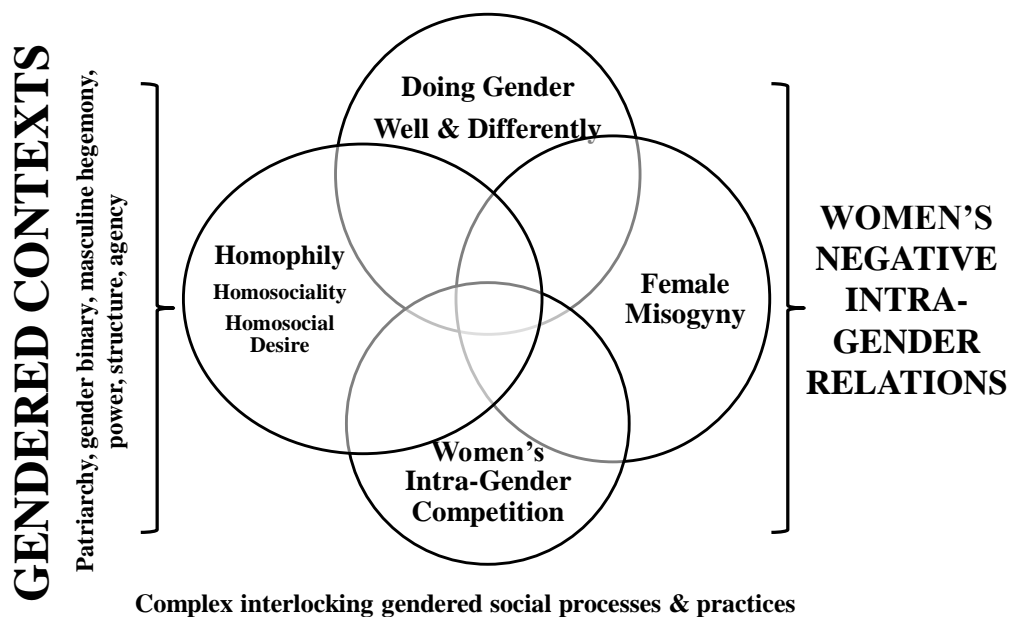
A Conceptual Framework of Women’s Negative Intra-gender Relations

We now move to summarise our discussions and draw together our conceptual framework (shown at Figure 6.) and highlight the research questions which emerge when exploring gender in organizations through this lens. In developing the initial conceptual framework we have given regard to the gendered contexts within which social processes and experiences take place, including agency, structure, culture, patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity; ambiguity, instability and fluidization of gender roles; the doing of gender well

and differently simultaneously and the continued evaluation of men and women against gender binaries. These gendered contexts are surfaced as salient issues to consider as they shape, construct and constrain women’s intra-gender work relationships in organizations.

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Figure 6. A Conceptual Framework of Women’s Negative Intra-Gender Relations



Our assumptions include women’s direct comparison to men, whilst being disadvantaged from the start (Connell, 1987) through hegemonic masculinity, which constructs a hierarchy of masculinities, continuing to construct gender relations at different levels (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). In doing so we recognised Connell’s (1987: 228) ‘emphasized femininity’ performed for men which closes down the possibility of other femininities, versus women’s engagement in complexities of resistance. At the same time, our position of doing gender well and differently, enacting masculinities and femininities

simultaneously, (Mavin and Grandy, 2011; 2012) is a process which opens up the possibilities for women to be otherwise. However, women's conscious/unconscious negative responses to other women when they engage in masculinities, do gender differently and resist hegemonic masculinity by disrupting the gender order have been theorized here as resulting in negative intra-gender relations between women. These negative relations contribute to the constraints around possibilities for women to be otherwise and require further research.

Our theorization of women's negative intra-gender relations within this context has drawn upon homophily (Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1954) and homosociality (Gruenfeld and Tiedens, 2005), women's intra-gender competition and female misogyny (Mavin, 2006 a, b). If, despite complexities in relations between masculinities (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005), men's intra-gender relations can be characterised by competition, cooperation, friendship and support, albeit potentially instrumentally (Collinson and Hearn, 2005), the academy should explore women's intra-gender relations in organizations and raise consciousness to gender contexts and resulting social relations in order to challenge prevailing gender orders.

Processes of friendship formation between women at work and how these are constructed by gendered contexts and impact upon women's potential for homophily and homosociality, require further attention. Integrating women's intra-gender competition and female misogyny into the framework, raises more questions. We have highlighted the contradictions in women's expectations of other women at work through solidarity behaviour, whilst simultaneously constructing senior women as Queen Bees (who do gender differently) and engagement in female misogyny to negatively evaluate other women. In constructing an initial conceptual framework to begin to account for women's negative intra-gender relations, a number of questions emerge to guide our future research. How does female misogyny play

out when women do gender well and differently, enacting femininity and/or masculinities simultaneously? How does female misogyny undermine social processes of friendship (horizontally and vertically) between women at work and how does this restrict women's ability to engage in homosociality with women? Are women aware of their intra-gender competition and its gendered nature? How is women's intra-gender competition covert and/or overt? If female misogyny and intra-gender competition constrain women's potential to be otherwise, undermining women's solidarity, how do women develop the capacity to cooperate and compete in organizations in ways which are less damaging and more enabling, than the negative relations women operate towards each other (consciously or unconsciously)? How do women in organizations build and engage in their own homophily, homosociality and develop alternative homosocial desire? How should the academy raise consciousness to gender contexts and resulting women's negative intra-gender relations, in order to challenge the prevailing gendered order?

A further contribution of the conceptual framework is the act of speaking the unspeakable. This in itself is a means of consciousness raising to the nature and possible impact of women's negative intra-gender relations and aims to continue the dialogue. It is critical for women to increase their gender consciousness (Martin, 2003; Mavin, 2006 a, b) and understand how gendered expectations, contexts and order, impact upon their own responses to other women (and vice versa) and to enable acceptance of intra-gender differences which have the potential to improve opportunities for, and to facilitate more positive relationships between, women in organizations.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have positioned women's negative intra-gender relations as an under researched and hidden area of gender in organizations, worthy of exploration and problematization due to the centrality and criticality in women's experiences and progress in organizations. In reflecting back to Kanter's (1977) proposition that as women's numbers swelled, that women were more likely to form allegiances, coalitions and affect the culture of the organization, it is time to further explore women's intra-gender relations and the shadow side of such relations, which may serve to maintain the status quo rather than challenge, disrupt and affect change. We have endeavoured to ensure that in problematizing women's social relations at work, this is not reduced to a "woman's problem" by acknowledging that these are a production of the gendered contexts in which they take place. We have acknowledged individual subjectivities and differences within and between individual and groups of women and men and have also drawn upon sex, sex category and the gender binary, as we understand this remains a source of evaluation for individuals and groups.

We have theorized women's negative intra-gender relations in organization by integrating theory in the areas of doing gender well and differently, homophily and homosociality, women's intra-gender competition and female misogyny, as complex interlocking gendered practices and processes (Acker, 2009). Our contribution is a conceptual framework of women's intra-gender relations, which aims to reveal different forms of gender in action in organizations. We have extended the theoretical development of women's negative relations within gendered organizational contexts, by recognising that they have the power to limit the potential for homosocial and homophilous relations between women. Exploring the nature of women's social relations through intra-gender competition, processes

of female misogyny in organizations and the interplay with homosociality and homophily, offers new insights into the gendered nature of organizations and how gendered organizing processes impact upon social interactions and relationships between women. Finally we have posed a number of questions to guide future research agendas and hope others will continue the dialogue.

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