Position Paper

Gender Change in Organizational Arenas: Gender Mainstreaming as a Process of Translation

Dr. Zeev Lerer and Hadass Ben-Eliyahu

December 2011

Introduction

Over the last three decades, ever since Rosabeth Moss Canter (1977) focused our attention on the status of women in work organizations, feminist organizational research and theorizing developed sharp analytical tools for recognizing and deciphering the gendered nature inherent in work organizations (Acker 2006; Acker 1990; Meyerson and Kolb 2000; Yancey-Martin 2006). Their gendered structures, practices and internal cultures, as well as their gendering effect on society, had been studied and understood. This analytical drive was accompanied by much reflection and development of change ideas and practices: from equal opportunity, affirmative action and sexual harassment legislation, to training and empowerment plans and, more recently, strategies of gender mainstreaming (Kalev, Dobin and Kelly 2006).

The question of women's position, power and status in organizations is essential to promoting gender equality, since organizations and social institutions provide the central arenas and settings in which gender hierarchies, inequalities and disadvantages are created and reproduced. In today's organizations and institutions, formal and overt discrimination is less evident and detectable as a result of legislation that prohibits and restricts them. Instead, gender hierarchies and disadvantages continue to be created and reproduced by a complex array of informal and subtle practices, mechanisms and discourses which are deeply embedded in organizational structures and cultures. Initializing and mobilizing gender change within organizations becomes, therefore, much more complex.

Over the years, it became obvious that there is no easy fusion between the sophisticated deciphering tools and the vast range of change plans and prescriptions. In other words, it is the experience of most practitioners that while we can often identify the problems and outline the plan to correct them, we still cannot manage to implement the desired (and many times obvious) course of action on the way to equality. This frustrating gap cannot be dismissed as just another proof of the deep-rootedness of patriarchy, prevalence of chauvinism or the marginal position of women. All these are of course part of it, but prevent an in-depth optimistic inquiry into this gap.

In this paper we attempt to address this gap by developing a new approach to gender change within organizations. This approach, which evolves from theories and experiences accumulated over years of feminist efforts in promoting gender change within organizations, is based on the premise that between the ability to decipher gendered power structures and practices, and the change prescriptions derived from them, lies the organization as a "black box." This black box needs to be opened, decoded and refigured in order for gender change to be initiated and materialized. This perspective identifies the organization and its internal arenas and power structures as the center of gravity for change and as an obligatory passage point which should not be skipped or left to hopeful expectations. Rather, it is part and parcel of any change project.

Throughout the paper, we utilize three examples[1] to help us demonstrate and illustrate our theory and epistemology. The first example is based on a project carried out by two of our students,[2] who analyzed gendered practices in a fitness club. They based their analysis on interviews with women who practice at the club and on observations. Our second example is derived from a movie called

---

1   The examples appear in framed text boxes throughout the paper.

2   Yael Dullman and David Metsuyanim

Made in Dagenham, which tells the true story of the fight of women for equal pay in England in the 1960s. The movie focuses on the women machinists in a Ford car factory, who went on strike in order to be recognized as skilled workers and to receive fair and equal pay, as the men, for their work. The third example depicts the efforts to transform service in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) into a less exclusionary experience for women. It is based on the practical experiences of both authors who participated in these change processes.[3] The main goal of these efforts was to change various aspects of the gendered service model for women, including opening combat positions for women, and adapting infrastructures and facilities in order to enable women to successfully serve in these newly opened positions.

Internal Organizational Arenas and Gender Change: The Problem

Why is it so hard to generate gender change within organizations? Why do so many change projects and the ongoing work of internal office holders leave only disappointingly meager traces, even when they are backed by financial resources and organizational goodwill? In this section we shall lay the theoretical foundations for uncovering this problem. Canter's groundbreaking look at women in organizations revealed the ways in which organizational structures are designed and conceived in the image of the working man. These structures create unequal opportunity structures, and patterns of roles and images which are exclusionary and disadvantaged for women trying to "fit in" into these organizational molds. Canter raised the idea that organizational inequality is not a result of women's pre-organizational attributes or "sex differences" providing women with lesser human capital for success, but rather that disadvantage and exclusion are inherent in the masculine structure of bureaucratic management and the "token" status of women within them.

Almost two decades after Canter, Joan Acker, in another major and groundbreaking analysis, offered additional dimensions for understanding gender in organizations. She claims that gender inequality is not just a result of women's different position within pre-set organizational structures, but that these structures themselves are gendered: "Gender stands for the pervasive ordering of human activities, practices and social structures in terms of differentiations between women and men" (Acker 1992, 567). This claim was far-reaching: Gender is embodied in all social institutions, structures and processes. The major social institutions, as well as work organizations, were created and controlled by men, perceived from masculine points of view, and more importantly were defined by the absence of women. In Acker's terms, organizations are gendered. Thus, gender inequality in organizations cannot be understood only through individuals' experiences and positions, but we must focus on organizational structures and processes themselves in order to understand and change them. Acker also outlines the deep embededness of gender in all major aspects of organizations: structural, cultural, interactional and intrapersonal.

On the basis of these understandings, Acker (2000) commenting on a report of a large-scale project of organizational gender change addresses the issue of how internal powers and structures impede gender change in organizations. She describes a series of contradictions inherent in projects of gender change which act as roadblocks on the way to realizing gender change. The first contradiction

---

3   Both authors served as career officers in the Behavioral Sciences Department of the IDF, and over the years were part of various change projects and committees aimed at de-gendering military service.

derives from the fact that change projects that inherently challenge internal power structures are completely dependent on the legitimacy and support given to them by power stakeholders in the organization. The promoters of change lack the organizational power needed to advance and implement it. Second, gender is embedded in organizational practices even if they appear gender-neutral. To promote gender change, one must therefore change basic organizational practices, but herein lays a contradiction: The drive for gender equality is not sufficient to advance change in organizational practices. As a result, the goal of gender equality disappears from the change project, leaving only organizational practices as the focus for change. Moreover, any project of gender change threatens existing power and reward structures, making gender equality conflict with the interests of many organizational actors who actively resist it. Related is the contradiction that often time exists (or perceived to exist) between organizational objectives (such as profits or efficiency) and gender equality. Since gender is embedded in different organizational practices, to implement gender change, organizational practices that appear to members of the organization to be gender-neutral or objective, must be changed. Evaluating organizational practices at different levels and of various functions of the organization in the name of gender equity may not be in congruence with organizational efficiency or values. Another contradiction is between the rhythm and timing of the organization and those of the change project. Usually, change projects require more time and energy than the organization is willing to invest, or they advance at a much slower pace than the more business oriented organization. Another contradiction is between gender-related and class-related organizing objectives. Any attempt to enhance equity in one aspect will have implications for the other, usually against management's interest. Last but not least, is the contradiction between gender identities that sustain organizational culture, activities and success, mostly masculine identities, and promoting gender equality in organizations.

Following these approaches pointing to the deep embededness of gender in organizations, the main premise underlining our approach is that the central obstacle to gender change lies in the active resistance within organizations to any attempts to redistribute gendered power structures as part of change processes. This resistance is generated by internal organizational dynamics and stands in the way of change. By internal organizational dynamics we refer to interactions and conjunctions of arrays of interests, logics and motivations carried out by internal actors, segments and institutions within internal organizational arenas.

Basic Assumptions

Acker's important analysis, as well as the experience of many practitioners, illustrates that gender-change projects fail because the drive for gender change lacks the power or momentum necessary to bring about change in an existing structure or practice. Acker's contradictions indicate the asymmetries that exist between the internal power and resources of agents carrying the drive for change, and the power structure that preserves existing gendered structures in their place. The lack of management support, the weakness of agents who are part of the organizational staff, the weakness of "gender claims" as a legitimate rationale for change as opposed to considerations of organizational efficiency – all amount to an inherent asymmetry in the balance of power, a balance that is a prerequisite for organizational change.

We would like to capitalize on Acker's analysis and translate it into an epistemological view of organizations and gender change. First we would like to suggest a conflictual and political view of organizations (Morgan 2006). Unlike perceptions of organizations as rationalized, coherent homogeneous structures, we follow theories which read organizations as loose networks composed of arenas swarming and bustling with conflicts and interactions among multiple actors, institutions, interests and professional logics. These interactions and conflicts constantly weave a flux of organizational phenomena: structures, practices, processes driven by the currency of power.

From the vast selections of theories and conceptualizations revolving around this reading of organizations, we have found it useful and helpful to rely on the Actor-Network Theory (ANT) (Alcadipani and Hassard 2010; Czarniawska and Sevon 1996). Specifically, this view suggests we look at organizations (as well as any social phenomenon) as a constellational network of actants interacting through associations which ultimately create what Latour terms "black boxes" – realities, facts or structures which are perceived as natural and obvious, as "the way things are." The interactions between actants may involve conflicts, controversies, competitions, joining of interests, mobilization of allies, ideas and resources (all of which are perceived by this approach as what really comprises "the social"). These interactions result in a temporarily sealing of "black boxes" – namely, a specific configuration of a structure or a practice at a certain point in time. At any given time, due to controversial interactions, the black box may be reopened and sealed again in a different pattern or configuration. From this point of view, all "gendered practices" (Yancey-Martin 2006) can be viewed as black boxes (for example, the height of podiums, organizational working hours, the jokes told at board meetings, the way the boss asks for his coffee, the wage structure in an organization), and we can also understand Acker's "gendered regimes" (2006) as a long, loosely connected chain of black boxes.

> For example, in the 1960s the fight of women to receive equal pay for equal work can be understood as a process of re-opening a black box. This discriminating wage practice, which was perceived by most for many years as "the natural order of things," was challenged and made controversial by women acting in varied ways connected with the network surrounding this black box (legislation, strikes, media coverage, political coalitions, etc.). Their efforts were directed at opening and re-sealing the black box as a more equal wage practice for the years to come.

From this perspective, gender change is inherently a process of re-opening and re-sealing gendered black boxes. However, merely identifying the black box and imagining a new, gender-free or non-exclusionary black box is far from satisfactory. This is because opening and closing black boxes has to work, in an effective way, through the entire actant networks which sustain them and keep them sealed. In practice, this process entails constantly handling three concomitant levels of analysis or deciphering: First, identifying and recognizing what are the relevant black boxes which are gendering the lives and experiences of organizational participants. This is the best developed, sharpest and most sophisticated endowment offered to us by current feminist analysis (Alversson and Billing 1992; Calas and Smircich 1996; Bowles 1993; Gherardi 1995; Acker 1990; Acker 2006; Meyerson and Kolb 2000; Yancey-Martin 2006), as well as the most advanced intellectual and conceptual deciphering tools. Indeed, in most change projects, such as those described by Meyerson and Kolb (2000), the

identification of well embedded and sophisticated organizational gender practices is the most developed and effective phase. Usually described as "putting on gender lenses" (Wikigender.org/index.php/gender_lens), this phase includes using existing feminist knowledge and methodologies of inquiry for identifying and analyzing the central exclusory mechanisms within one or more organizational arenas. Feminist analysis teaches us that those practices and mechanisms are multilayered and can be searched for in different levels of the organization: human resource practices of recruiting, selecting, placement and promotion which track men and women into a gendered division of labor (Baron and Bielby 1985); organization or structuring of work such as the way work is organized and controlled, spatial arrangements of facilities and equipment, work infrastructures, instructional and communicational practices, work requirements, work process; social and cultural practices such as models of the successful worker or manager, what constitutes organizational, social and symbolic capital; intergroup interactions of competition, conflict or hostility; institutionalized patterns of micro-interpersonal interactions such as sexual harassment, authority practices, access to social networks and internal relationships, and the common social scripts used in social situations.[4]

> For example, in the pilot stage of the present project, spatial arrangements at gym classes, travel schedules of buses and opening hours of health clinics were all explored as gendered practices.

This is an exploration for the exclusionary and gendered meaning and functioning of sometimes deep-rooted, natural and obvious aspects of organizational life. It is achieved through the unraveling of gendered hierarchical differences associated with these practices, which ultimately portray different images of organizational experiences, participation, meaning or rewards of various groups of men and women in the organization. This exploration process requires combining an intimate knowledge of the knots and bolts of the organization with the way it is experienced by women participants through their own eyes, as well as the feminist knowledge required to decipher the gendered meaning of all this.

> For example, many women report feeling uncomfortable working out in fitness clubs because of the way men stare at their bodies during practice. Some even report that they avoid such clubs altogether or that they only participate in women-only classes in order to avoid the masculine stare. From our perspective, the masculine stare is an exclusionary practice in that it affects the experiences of many different women over time. If we were to participate in a change project, to make fitness clubs more comfortable for women, and less gendered or exclusionary environments for women, we would attempt at the first level to achieve a deep understanding of the gendered experience of women in fitness

---

4   Identifying gendered practices may include structures which are practiced in internal organizational arenas, as well as those practiced in the organizational environment –, i.e., the ways the organizational arena affects and genders the life of women in general. For example, in a newspaper editorial board, gendered practices may include practices that affect women who participate in board meetings and serve on the staff, but may also include the policy regarding the ways that masculinity and femininity are represented in texts and pictures in the paper itself.

clubs. By interviewing women, we can learn what they usually do at the club, what kind of classes they take, what equipment they use, what kind of interactions they have there, if there are places in the club that they avoid or feel uncomfortable in, and why. By observing what happens inside the fitness club, we can map out how the equipment (an actant in itself) is positioned and utilized and who uses what machines, and we can analyze interactions among various actants. Our analysis of the fitness club is conducted through gender lenses – e.g., we look for gendered effects, experiences and expressions of the practice of the masculine stare. We use our feminist knowledge and conceptual tools to uncover the gendered power relations embedded in this practice.

The key question underlining the second level of enquiry is: How are the black boxes kept closed and unquestioned? Or, how are the gendered practices sustained and held in place? While the previous level of analysis is commonly practiced in most change endeavors, we feel that this level provides the critical missing link in the translation of the insights achieved by the organizational reading at the first level into gender change. This second level of analysis requires identifying and tracking the Actant Network which surrounds and sustains gendered black boxes. This is critically important, because understanding how the specific network holding the black box is constituted and operates amounts to understanding what it takes to change the practice or structures it sustains. There are several tools and steps which can be utilized in this process (Callon 1986).

For example, Lerer (2009) and Levy (2011) describe the attempts to break the gendered division of labor and to bring to an end women's exclusion from core military occupations during the first decade of the 21st century. A series of actants holding together the exclusionary model of military service were recognized and described in this change process: manpower officers using the professional-bureaucratic logic of preventing manpower shortages and are therefore busy "manning the lines," field officers motivated by the logic of preserving masculine identity as a main source of mobilizing and motivating combat soldiers, religious organizations interested in amassing field units with religious soldiers and officers for political reasons, as well as non-human actants including the military service law, equipment such as helmets and shoes, and the 1.80 meter wall everyone must climb in the standard obstacle course of combat training. Even the tibia bone of women combat soldiers (the location of stress fractures) became an actant in the controversy.

In our example of the fitness clubs, relevant human actants included the women and men who go to the fitness club, the owners, managers and instructors. Other actants include the equipment, the facilities, the types of classes given, the schedule and the structural layout.

First, an enumeration of relevant actants is needed. Actants are not only human, but any sort of being that has a bearing on the existence of the black box. These may include not only human agents, such as workers and managers at different levels and positions in the organization, but also other social categories such as institutions, sub-organizations, groups, offices or functions. No less critical is the enumeration of what Latour (Latour 1986; 1987) terms non-human actants. These are entities on different levels of abstraction – from objects and machines to abstract ideas and images – which can be relevant to re-opening the re-opened black box. These may include examples from other organizations, laws and regulations, statistics and scientific facts, petitions and demonstrations, economic situation, historic and comparative examples, values and norms. These entities are translated by actants into the network and the controversies in order to support the change efforts and tip the balance of power in their favor.

Second, the history of the black box is also important. We should attempt to go back in time to the junction before the black box was sealed, in order to learn about the controversies that were raging, the alternatives which were available, and the forces which ultimately sealed the box in a specific form.

Third, for the enumerated actants, we should map their Point Of View (POV) regarding the black box. This is a crucial step in identifying possibilities for change. For this part, we suggest a few elements comprising the POV of an actant: the actant's logic of action underlining her/his approach to the black box – it could be a professional logic, such as financial, bureaucratic, organizational, judicial, etc. An actant can of course have several intermingled logics relating to the black box. We should also seek to understand the interests of the actant regarding the black box: What interests are fulfilled by its current state, what interests will be harmed or promoted by a change in the state of the black box? The actant's position and interaction within the surrounding network is also important: Who has power over whom in the network, what relationships exist between actants – cooperation, competition, other? These are some of the dimensions which together portray the actant's situational POV vis-a-vis the black box. Our understanding of the actant's POV is achieved mainly through interviews and observations. By interviewing and observing various actants, we try not only to uncover their opinions and feelings, but also to understand "how things work" and "why things get done in this way" in the organization: Who you turn to when you need advice, how conflicts are solved, who is considered to be successful and why, who makes the decisions and how, etc. It is important to understand that an actant's POV is not a constant, stable essence, but is constantly evolving and changing as the actor-network around the black box shifts. This structuring of the multidimensional map of POVs is a portrait of the maintenance process of the black boxes. In other words, it is a map of the real and practical organizational barriers and obstacles which stand in the way of actual change. Therefore, this inquiry into the actant's POV may also provide us with the keys for overcoming these barriers or for diminishing them.

This map leads us to the third level of deciphering. The key question here is how do we re-open, re-figure and re-seal a new, gender-free or gender-fair organizational black box. This is a process of planning and implementing an organized shuffling of the network, of repositioning actants and POVs around the black box in a way that allows for change and enables it. We can suggest a few issues that should be considered at this level.

First, de-freezing the black box: an act of problematization through spurring a controversy around it. This act relies heavily on deciphering the first level – namely, questioning the mere naturality, objectiveness and necessity of the gendered practice, and moving it from its transparent and obvious status into something which must be defended, explained and justified. This controversy can be

raised by a host of means, but the main means of problematization is to suggest and to give presence to a de-gendered alternative, or a Non-Exclusionary Practice (NEP). The NEP should be based on the POV's map, in a way that it will be an "offer that can't be refused" – it should be a translation of actual POVs in that it is not an external, abstract or utopian idea of change or equality, but rooted in and congruent with the actants-network POVs. This translation of actants' POVs and positions into an NEP is also a necessary step in the mobilization of actants into opening and sealing the black box. Mobilization of actants may include importing and injecting new actants into the network (such as the law, public pressure, external organizations, and media or government agencies). This is also referred to as the creation of an Obligatory Passage Point (OPP) (Callon 1986) – a common solution or practice that the actants translate and view (or are forced to view) as congruent with their interests or at least as non-objectionable or as raising minimal objection. This also requires the identification of central arenas of resolution – the sites and situations within the organization where critical, enforceable and final decision-making processes regarding the black box, take place. The problematization, translation, mobilization and alignment of actants into an OPP are all geared toward the critical resolution arenas.

The Alice Miller court appeal, which ultimately opened the gate for women into IDF's fighter-pilot course, is a good example of the whole process, the problematization – NEP – mobilization – translation – OPP – into a resolution arena. At the first stage, Alice Miller problematized the black box of women's exclusion from the course by appealing to the Supreme Court in Israel, an act which ignited a controversy around the black box but channeled it into a favorable resolution arena (her previous attempts to convince officials within the IDF were futile). In the controversy that erupted, mobilization of allied actants occurred – for example, civil rights organizations and a lobby of women's rights, Meretz MP Naomi Chazan, and even at some point actants within the military itself. At the second stage, the court appeal created an OPP for most actants that led to a second resolution arena: the amendment to the military service law in 2000. This law was accepted and supported by military actants, since it was possible to include in the law translations of major interests (mainly, military actants' interests, such as using women to overcome manpower shortages in the IDF, and earning social legitimation in the critical social climate of the 1990s.

The Dagenham strike within the campaign for equal pay for women also provides a good example of successful problematization, a clear NEP, mobilization of actants and translation of their POVs into an OPP leading to a resolution arena. The act of a strike opened up the black box of unequal pay and enabled the controversy to rage. Major actants such as men working at the factory, trade union officials, company management, American headquarters, the British Ministry of Trade, the press, and even the Prime Minister were led into an OPP by various mobilization and translation acts. These led ultimately to a common POV regarding the black box of unequal pay for women, and the ability to object and the legitimacy of objections to this gender change were reduced or eliminated.

In the fitness club example, we observed at the first level of analysis that the equipment (an actant) in the fitness club is positioned in such a way that it forces the women practicing in the club to be exposed at all times to a masculine stare which they report to be experienced as oppressive and deterring. We wanted to convince the owners of the club to change this gendered practice and to create a more comfortable environment for women. Our POV analysis reveals the underlying logic of the owners to be mainly financial: They want to increase their profits. They not only oppose anything that they interpret as threatening their profits, but they also do not want to invest in changes that they don't consider requisite or necessary. As a result of this understanding, our NEP (or de-gendered alternative) is to reposition some of the equipment is such a way that the women who wish to practice without being constantly stared at, can do so in the club. This alternative has two advantages that make it hard to refuse: It does not cost any money, and it may bring the club new women customers who had previously avoided it because of the experience of an oppressive gendered practice. We can problematize the current practice by mobilizing women who practice in the club (actants) to sign a petition requesting the owners to make the club friendlier to them, or by enlisting women who do not use the club to sign the petition with the intent of joining the club once the change is implemented. In addition we can publicize the issue in the media or in social networks as a means to create pressure on the owners. The translation of the NEP into a cost-free and potentially profit-generating change is directed at making the change "an offer that cannot be refused." We did not try to convince the owners to make this change out of moral considerations, for example, but rather to use their own logic and interests to promote this change.

AGENCY and CHANGE

The critical question that arises in view of our theoretical and conceptual discussion of gender change, is who should execute this change process, and how? Following the ANT reading of organizations, it is clear that no single agent or actant can bring about gender change in an organization. Moreover, the key to an effective change process is the ability to assemble and mobilize a mini-network of both internal and external actants in a way that reshuffles the power structure in the actant-network surrounding the black box.

There are usually a few key agents that may be involved in such a process. First, there may be in the organization an official capacity/office, in charge of gender equality, equal opportunities or even social responsibility. This office may initiate and coordinate the change project. The initiation may also derive from an internal agent not in an official capacity regarding these duties, such as women or men with varying degrees of gender awareness who are motivated by their gendered work experience or sense of social responsibility. They may occupy different positions in the echelons of the organization, and may hold varying degrees of power within organizational networks. Their position can vary from management to junior and even entry-level jobs in any organizational segment. Alice Miller, for example, is a woman who became an active agent as a result of her personal awareness, experience and dream – she wanted to be fighter pilot in the IDF. Since the course excluded women, she started the process of change. Another example for an internal agent who became an active

actant is that of Rita O'Grady, who worked at the Ford factory in Dagenham as a machinist. She became the leader of the women machinists' campaign for equal pay – not because she had a formal leading position, but mainly as a result of a feeling of responsibility and solidarity.

Another important group of agents may come from external civil society organizations that see themselves as stakeholders in gender change. These may include feminist activists, civil rights activists, equal opportunities groups or organizations and academic researchers who may offer resources for the process. These resources may include legal assistance, financial support, political backing, relevant knowledge and know-how, media coverage and publicity, and the ability to recruit and mobilize other external and internal actants into the process. Other external actants drawn into the network may include government agencies such as Equal Opportunities Commissions, government officials, politicians and courts of law. These may supply the change-actants-network with coercive and enforcing power.

Platforms for Change

The processes described above require a defined platform that will be conductive for change. By platform we mean a site defined by space and time, in which the problematization of black boxes, mobilization and translation of actants-networks can be carried out, in a way that leads the process through OPPs to a specific resolution arena with a favorable balance of power. These platforms may be varied: from officially endorsed change projects, steering committees and organizational interventions, to unofficial forums, workgroups or efforts to insert gender considerations into organizational planning routines (as in gender mainstreaming). The platform may become effective under two conditions: First, it should be based on and guided by the constant and ongoing process of deciphering the organization at the three levels discussed above. Second, it should allow and enable the actants' translation process itself – i.e., the platform should provide easy access to a wide array of actants and enable the creation of a process that will bring them together and allow them to negotiate and translate their POVs around the black box. Thus, an official change project or a steering committee may be a fruitless ceremonial event if it does not become an arena in which critical actants and their POVs are voiced, clashed, re-translated and negotiated along a path leading to a resolution arena which is forceful enough to create real and apparent change in a gendered practice. It also means that for such a platform to be effective it should be a guided tour, carefully navigated by an actant or a group of actants constantly holding, drawing and updating the actant-network map. In our example of the fight of women for equal pay, one such platform was the process of re-grading the pay scale for workers of the motorcar industry. This process served as a platform, as it brought together the actants-network relevant for changing the gendered practice of unequal pay: government officials, union members, women workers, men workers, owners of car companies, managers of factories, members of the media and many more. At various resolution arenas, the women leading the fight were able to translate their POV and their goals in such a way that it mobilized other actants to support them when decisions were made at various resolution arenas – for example, having union members voting in favor of the demand for equal pay, or achieving the support of the government in a law for equal pay.

An example of such a very efficient platform is the Segev Committee, which was appointed in 2007 to examine the model of military service for women in the IDF. This committee was established by the Chief of General Staff and enjoyed a vast mandate to examine each and every aspect of military service. It was composed of members representing the POVs of most major (and many times hostile) actants in the networks surrounding major gendered exclusionary practices within the IDF (such as the chief military Rabbi, and members of the Ground Force Command). However, this platform also enabled the presence and representation of external actants, and their active mobilization into the network as it emerged.

Therefore, concern for promoting change is not the problem of how forceful is one single actant who initiates the change or who is being relied upon to actualize it (management, organizational adviser, head of a department, etc.), but rather an issue of devising a forceful setting or constellation of actants.

Practical Considerations in Implementation

The conceptualization suggested above for an organizational gender change process can be translated and implemented in multiple forms, ways and models. The above-mentioned considerations do not form, in any way, a precise prescription or recipe for the exact methods to conduct a change process or project. They are a conceptual grid which we think should be used to guide and navigate such processes.

Along these lines, in the following section we would like to suggest one possible translation of this guiding grid into a practical model for implementing gender change in organizations. This model is being developed and implemented as part of the Gender Translation Project being carried out jointly by the Advancing Women In Public Spheres Center (WIPS) at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute and the Gender Studies MA Program at Tel Aviv University. This project is generously supported by the Heinrich Böll Foundation.

The project focuses mainly on empowering women who are members of organizations to become actants in changing the gendered structures of their respective organizations, and supplying them with effective and ethical tools of agency. It is based on the idea that when supplied and supported with the right resources, women, whether in a relevant official capacity or just in an organizational position, can become effective agents in de-gendering their organizations and in creating respectful and egalitarian work environments which allow for the full realization of women's potential.

This model is comprised of two main stages: Becoming an Actant and Being an Actant. The first stage is structured around supplying members with conceptual, intellectual and awareness tools; the second stage is centered on structuring and mobilizing practical resources for the effective translation of gender knowledge into organizational change.

Stage 1: Becoming an Actant

The aim of this stage is to supply members with what can be described as an "extended gender lens." By this we mean that the traditional gender lens – i.e., the ability to decipher or read the gendered aspects and consequences of organizations, structures and practices – is extended to reading the organization through the three mutual levels of deciphering suggested in the previous sections. We identify not only the gendered practices, but the entire Actant Network sustaining them and the pathways to change.

This stage was piloted in a workshop for graduate students in the Gender Studies Program at Tel Aviv University. The workshop was entitled "Gender Translation Workshop." It was based on supplying the students with analytical tools simultaneously translated into real-life organizational settings. Each member chose a target organization and was encouraged to practice the "extended gender lens" in her organizational surroundings. This included identifying and deciphering central gendered practices, their meaning and consequences; identifying actants, networks and POVs sustaining those practices; and identifying pathways to change: problematizations, non-exclusionary alternatives, mobilization and translation of actants into obligatory passage points and resolution arenas.

One of the main guidelines for this stage was to keep the deciphering work non-obtrusive. Students were not required or encouraged to put themselves in an intervention position in any way. The projects were kept analytical and simulative in nature. This was due to ethical considerations: Past experiences teach us that the agent position is a sensitive and perilous one, and this topic was a central issue elaborated and reflected upon during the workshop. The students, who are members of the organizations that they are analyzing, are subjected to the very same power structures that we are attempting to identify and change. Facing and challenging power, by becoming an actant, should therefore not be done blindfolded, but through awareness, reflection, calculation and, more importantly, a "Safety First" approach. By "Safety First" we mean that the actant's position, welfare and future in the organization should not be put in jeopardy by this process. On the contrary, actants should feel empowered and fulfilled by taking an active part in realizing social responsibility regarding their work environment. Therefore, for stage 1, the required output was a thorough conceptual analysis of the chosen organization, based on the three levels of deciphering. However, no actual interventions were required. The actual practical aspects were covered by a series of simulations in which organizational settings, actants and networks were recreated and practiced upon.

Stage 2: Being an Actant

This is a prospective stage. It is based on lessons learned from the Gender Studies pilot project, and from a similar workshop carried out by the authors with the Women's Forum in the town of Rosh Ha'ayin. It is planned to be based and hosted by WIPS.

This second stage focuses on equipping actants with the practical infrastructure and resources for practicing change efforts. These include several elements. First, an ongoing group of actants who practice gender change in various organizations. The group acts as a site for reflecting, planning and supervision based on the three-level deciphering model. Group members use the shared insights and the evolving experiences of other members. Second, this work group provides a hub for resources made available to actants. These include contacts, cooperation and support from relevant groups, organizations and institutions which might be mobilized into the Actant Network at different stages or circumstances, legal consultations and aid, media and public relations assistance, etc.

Thus, the work group supports and accompanies members in identifying gender practices which are important and/or realistic for change. The members are supported in planning a practical platform for change, which is congruent with their respective positions in the organizational power structure, in identifying and approaching critical organizational actants, and in mobilizing actants and resources for the negotiation of the change process. As mentioned, careful consideration is given to the agent's position in planning the platform and the processes of change – more specifically, ensuring that risks for actants will be minimized in the process.

Conclusion

In the present paper we suggest a conceptual and practical framework for approaching the problem of gender change in organizations. This framework is based on the understanding that between the ability to identify or diagnose gendered organizational practices and structures, and the ability to envision gender-fair or gender-free alternatives to these practices, lies the organization itself. Its power structures and internal arenas act as a multidimensional obstacle course on the way to materializing change. The conceptual framework integrates insights from gendered organization theory which understands gender in organizations as a power structure, with Actor-Network Theory concepts of and approach to organizational change. The framework suggested extending the gender lens into a three-level deciphering process of gender in an organization. This process provides a grid that guides and navigates the change process. In the final section we suggest a model for developing a platform for gender change which presents a practical translation of the conceptual framework.

These frameworks and models by no means provide a deterministic or even precise recipe for gender mainstreaming organizations. This would be a total underestimation of the power inherent in gender structures and organizational processes. Rather, it provides a grid which focuses attention and efforts on the sort of organizational terrain which should be dealt with, and treats it with the respect it deserves.

There is also no suggestion that gender change in organizations is a close-ended process, with clear beginning and ending points. This, too, would be an underestimation of gendered power structures. Instead, we see it as an open-ended process, sometimes circular, sometimes, hopefully, spiral. Achieving a change in a gendered practice may be the beginning of the road, and may necessitate a re-start of the deciphering process in order to recognize unintended gendered consequences. Backlashes may appear in the form of re-gendering the practice, or in gendering practices in other parts of the organizational system (see for example Sasson-Levy and Amram-Katz 2007). Gender change is never really a project, but an ongoing steady state process. In this process there is always dynamic interaction and tension between constant reflection, deciphering and planning the pathways leading to change, and reacting to emergent, ever changing gender situations within the organizational system.

This is not necessarily a pessimistic conclusion, but in our eyes a realistic and practical view of what gender change is all about. It requires slow, patient, calculated and constant problematization and challenges to gendered practices. The hope of assimilating the gender viewpoint into organizations lies in the sheer consistency of these cycles, carried out by many actants in many organizations.

Bibliography

Acker, Joan. 1990. "Hierarchies, Jobs and Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations," *Gender and Society* 4: 139-158.

–––. 1992. "Gendered Institutions", *Contemporary Sociology 21*, pp. 565-569

–––. 2000. "Gendered Contradictions in Organizational Equity Projects," *Organization* 7(4): 625-634.

–––. 2006. "Inequality Regimes: Gender, Class and Race in Organizations," *Gender and Society* 20(4) (August): 441-464.

Alcadipani, Rafael, and John Hassard. 2010. "Actor-Network Theory, Organizations and Critique: Towards a Politics of Organizing," *Organization* 17 (July): 419-435.

Alversson, M., and Y. E. Billing. 1992. "Gender and Organizations: Towards a Differentiated Understanding," *Organization Studies* 13: 73-104.

Baron, James N., and William T. Bielby. 1985. "Organizational Barriers to Gender Equality: Sex Segregation of Jobs and Opportunities." In Alice S. Rossi (ed.), *Gender and the Life Course*. New York: Adline, pp. 233-251.

Bowles, M. 1993. "The Gods and Goddesses: Personifying Social Life in the Age of Organizations," *Organization Studies* 14: 395-418.

Calas, Marta B., and Linda Smircich. 1996. "From 'the Women's' Point of View: Feminist Approaches to Organization Studies." In Stewart R. Clegg, Cynthia Hardy and Walter R. Nord (eds.), *Handbook of Organization Studies*. London: Sage Publications, pp. 218-258.

Callon, Michel. 1986. "Some Elements of Sociology of Translation: Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St. Brieuc Bay." In J. Law (ed.), *Power, Action and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge?* London: Routledge, pp. 196-223.

Canter, Rosabeth Moss. 1977. *Men and Women of the Corporation*. New York: Basic Books.

Czarniawska, Barbara, and Guje Sevon (eds.). 1996. The chapter "Travel of Ideas," in idem (eds.), *Translating Organizational Change*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, pp. 13-48.

Gherardi, S. 1995. *Gender, Symbolism and Organizational Cultures*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kalev, Alexandra, Frank Dobbin and Erin Kelly. 2006. "Best Practices or Best Guesses? Assessing the Efficacy of Corporate Affirmative Action and Diversity Policies," *American Sociological Review* 71: 589-617.

Latour, Bruno. 1986. "The Powers of Association." In J. Law (eds.), *Power, Action and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge?* London: Routledge, pp. 264-280.

–––. 1987. *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Lerer, Zeev. 2009. *Equality for Women in the IDF? A Decade to the Change in the Law of Military Service in Israel*. Center for the Advancement of Women in the Public Sphere, Van-Leer Jerusalem Institute. (In Hebrew).

Levy, Yagil. 2011. "*Competition and Exclusion: Explaining Anti-Feminist Religious Rhetoric in the Israeli Defense Forces,*" Working Paper Series 12-2011, The Open University of Israel.

Meyerson, Debra E., and Deborah M. Kolb. 2000. "Moving Out of the 'Armchair': Developing a Framework to Bridge the Gap between Feminist Theory and Practice," *Organization* 7(4) (Nov.): 553-571.

Morgan, Gareth. 2006. *Images of Organization*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Sasson-Levy, Orna, and Sarit Amram-Katz. 2007. "Gender Integration in Israeli Officer Training: Degendering and Regendering the Military," *Signs* 33(1): 105-133.

Yancey-Martin, Patricia. 2006. "Practicing Gender at Work: Further Thoughts on Reflexivity," *Gender, Work and Organizations* 13(3) (May): 254-276.