Visibly Different from the Academic Norm:

An Appreciation of the Scholarship and Friendship of Professor Ruth Simpson

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Abstract

Purpose - Professor Ruth Simpson has been a key contributor to the field of Gender and Organization Studies (GOS) over the past 25 years. She has influenced debates on women in management, the gender of management education, masculinity and management and the "doing" of gender in organizational life. In this paper I review our joint work – informed by a poststructuralist feminist perspective – which considers the complex struggles around normativity in relation to management and entrepreneurship.

Design/Methodology/approach – This review is based on a consideration of four pieces of work completed between 2005 and 2012 including (Simpson and Lewis, 2005, 2007) and (Lewis and Simpson, 2010, 2012)

Findings - Drawing on the concepts of voice and visibility, the research examines how the ability to exemplify the norm in relation to management and entrepreneurship must be constantly secured and how processes of inclusion and exclusion in relation to the norm are characterised by relentless agitation and turmoil.

Originality/value – We develop the conceptual framework of the (In)visibility Vortex as a means of connecting the individual to organizational processes, discourses and cultural norms.

Key words: poststructuralist feminism, voice, visibility, invisibility, normativity

Introduction

I met Ruth in 1999 when she joined what was then called the School of Business and Management (now Brunel Business School) at Brunel University in West London. I had been working there since 1997 and had set up an undergraduate module called Gender and Organizations and Ruth set up a similar one at postgraduate level. From her interview presentation onwards (at the time I remember telling a colleague that she reminded me of Chrissie Hynde from The Pretenders) to her contribution to the intellectual life of the School – Ruth made a big impact. It was wonderful to work alongside someone with similar research interests and we had many discussions over lunch about gender issues. Having met at the end of the 1990s, our conversations were set within a research context where a belief in gender neutral organization and gender neutral management was rejected in favour of arguments emphasizing the gender subtext adhering to organizations and the way in which gender and management interact (e.g. Acker, 1990; Benschop and Doorewaard, 1998). Here, the focus is not on the effectiveness and efficiency of neutral organisations and what women might bring to this, rather the aim is to explore how and why management occurs in the way it does and the consequences of this (Brewis and Linstead, 1999). Additionally, the linguistic turn contributed to a shift away from a focus on the body of women to the body of the text, opening up a space to explore gender theoretically independent of particular sexed bodies, understanding it as relational and constituted by power (Calas and Smircich, 1999).

Of particular interest to us was the concept of the masculine norm adhering to management and entrepreneurship, whereby the characteristics and behaviours identified as necessary for managerial and entrepreneurial success were designated masculine and commonly ascribed to men but not women. Relating to the work of Collinson and Hearn

(1994, 1995) who highlighted the lack of attention directed at the tight connection between men, masculinities and management, we pondered the invisibility of the masculine in relation to management, entrepreneurship and organisations. Considerations of the phenomenon of invisibility within the context of work define it as being (i) physically out of sight, (ii) being ignored or overlooked, (iii) being socially marginalized, (iv) being economically and culturally devalued, (v) being legally unprotected and unregulated, or a combination of all five (Hatton, 2017). However, in relation to the work of management and entrepreneurship, an understanding of invisibility as *only* referring to being excluded and devalued did not ring true. Thus, rather than regarding the condition of invisibility as always representative of some type of cultural harm connected to a marginalized position, we approached the unnoticed, concealed, invisible masculinity of management and entrepreneurship as a source of power. Drawing on the work of authors such as Robinson (2000), Kusz (2001) Whitehead (2001) and Pierce (2003) we considered how being invisible is a key means by which dominant groups maintain their advantage. Here, invisibility is the means by which men and the masculine come to represent the normative case, the self-evident standard against which all difference is judged. To be conflated with normativity means being powerful in both cultural and material terms with access to organizational positions being effected by whether or not an individual represents the norm in any particular context (Simpson and Lewis, 2007).

As well as being interested in the (invisible) masculinity of management and entrepreneurship, we were also attracted to the suggestion that during the 1980s and the 1990s management was undergoing a process of feminization. In her article Ways Women Lead published in the *Harvard Business Review*, writers such as Judy Rosener (1990) claimed

that the characteristics and attributes required for management success in the 21st century are those culturally ascribed to women contributing to the emergence of a new management figure – the feminine leader. Referred to as the female advantage perspective, Rosener argued that as managers, women are interactional, participative, collaborative and relational thereby possessing in abundance the characteristics and behaviours needed in the learning, self-managing, post-bureaucratic organisations of the 21st century. Nevertheless, Rosener (1990: 125) warned against linking interactive leadership directly to being female as she argued that presenting women as more likely to be interactive leaders than men '…raises the risk that companies will perceive interactive leadership as "feminine" and automatically resist it'.

This suggestion that there was active resistance to the feminine was taken up in the work of writers such as Nanette Fondas (1997) who was not concerned with differences in the management styles of male and female managers per se. Rather, she was interested in the cultural feminization of management which she argued was occurring through the promotion of feminine qualities in descriptions of managerial work contained in management texts published in the 1980s and the 1990s. She suggested that such management texts acted as cultural carriers of a feminine ethos, that these texts legitimized feminine behaviours when managing and that the take-up of such behaviours by actual practicing managers would lead to its dissemination and institutionalization. Nevertheless, despite the valorisation of behaviours conventionally associated with the feminine, Fondas (1997) also demonstrated that while management texts framed managerial work in feminine terms, an effort was made to avoid naming it as such. Fondas (1997: 272) asked: "Why are the authors willing to use potent feminine imagery but not the name? Why do

4

they use the rhetoric that encourages the construction of organizational social systems, led by managers who embody codes of conduct ascribed to females, but avoid making the association?" She answers these questions by suggesting that the dilemma for management writers is that if they make clear how they constitute management as feminine, they are signifying that it is "not masculine" and this is a reversal of the subordination of femininity to masculinity in management discourse. In other words the norm of management shifts from the masculine to the feminine. If indeed this did occur (which it hasn't) then women would be better placed to increase their physical presence in the ranks of management and leadership as they would represent the managerial and organizational norm.

For myself and Ruth, what was clear was the difference in meaning and consequence that attached to the invisibility of the feminine in contemporary management writing – *hidden from history* –compared to the meaning and consequence attached to the invisibility of the masculine in most if not all mainstream management writing – *hidden by history* (Robinson, 2000)*. This stark contrast between invisibility as the cause and effect of exclusion from the ranks of management, and invisibility, which means conflation with normativity thereby facilitating inclusion, was of interest to us. Additionally, we were also intrigued by how and why historically advantaged groups such as men sought to be invisible and visible at one and the same time. Following Robinson (2000: 4) we wondered "…how normativity, constantly under revision, shifts in response to the changing social, political and cultural terrain (and how what) is at stake…is the power to define the terms of the normative (and that the) power to represent the normative must be constantly re-won". Thus, with these issues in mind we began working with the concepts of voice and (in)visibility by reviewing the gender and organization literature (Simpson and Lewis, 2005, 2007). Following this we

developed the conceptual framework of the (in)visibility vortex (Lewis and Simpson, 2010, 2012). We completed this work from the early 2000s onwards. Indeed our first iteration of some of these ideas was rejected by the gender stream of the British Academy of Management Conference - from memory this was on grounds of a weak literature review - which while disappointing at the time did not deter us from pursuing this line of inquiry!

Reading Feminist Perspectives through Voice and Visibility

Looking at the field of GOS, much of the research over the past 30 to 40 years has sought to demonstrate how gender, organizations, organizational practices and organization theory reciprocally mould each other. Such explorations are normally informed by one or more feminist perspectives and this body of theoretical work has shaped the outline of the GOS field (Calas et al., 2014). Many of the best known writers in the area of GOS (e.g. Alvesson and due Billing, 1997; Benschop and Verloo, 2016; Brewis and Linstead, 1999; Calas and Smircich, 1996, 2006; Gherardi, 2003) have presented accounts of the various feminist theories which have been drawn on in gender research, paying attention to the relationship between gender and management/organization practice and gender and management/ organization theory (Brewis and Linstead, 1999). These authors have sought to comprehensively outline the range of feminist perspectives adopted. For example Calas and Smircich (1996, 2006) present six different feminist approaches which have been drawn upon by writers investigating gender issues in organizations. These include: liberal feminism, radical feminism, psychoanalytic feminism, socialist feminism, poststructuralist/postmodern feminism and transnational/postcolonial feminism. In contributing to this area of discussion within GOS, we did not direct our attention at the full

6

range of feminist perspectives which have been drawn upon to interpret the complex and intertwined relationship between gender and management and gender and organization. Rather, in presenting a review of the literature on gender and organizations through the concepts of voice and visibility (Simpson and Lewis, 2005, 2007) we followed Witz and Savage (1992) by focusing on three feminist perspectives – liberal feminism, radical feminism and poststructuralist feminism – with much of our review concentrating on liberal feminism and poststructuralist feminism. We considered the differences between these perspectives by outlining a distinction between surface and deep understandings of the concepts of voice and visibility and we illustrated this framework through a further review of the gender and entrepreneurship literature.

Surface conceptualizations of voice

Beginning with the surface conceptualization of voice, we considered work which highlighted the silencing of women's voices and the suppression of gender issues in the management and organization studies field. Presenting management and organizations as gender neutral meant understanding management in terms of a set of functions and/or as maintaining an appropriate, professional relationship with those being managed. The embodied and gendered nature of management which is experienced differently by men and women is ignored (Brewis and Linstead, 1999). Research which sought to bring women's voice into management and organization studies wanted to highlight that women speak and manage differently to men. Writers such as Gilligan (1982) focused on the exclusion of women from the development of theory – in that we have listened to the voices of men for centuries taking men's experience as the standard, thereby failing to hear the voices of women and being blind to the different reality women experience. Putting

women at the centre of its analysis, the women's voice literature places an emphasis on the historical 'weak presence' of women in literature and theorizing. In a seminal article published in *Organization Studies*, Fiona Wilson (1996:825) argued that the management and organization field has been "…tenaciously blind and deaf to gender". Responses to this argument, for example, Brewis and Linstead (1999) and Linstead (2000) go further asserting that there is not just blindness to women in mainstream (malestream) theories but there is evidence of active suppression of female experience in the work of the classical (Taylor and Weber) and human relations theorists (Mayo and Maslow). What is highlighted through research such as the women's voice literature is how women's silence in academic disciplines such as management and organization studies signals a state of absence and neglect that should be rectified by bringing women's voice and viewpoint into the theoretical conversation.

The surface argument of the women's voice literature has roots in the liberal feminist perspective which originally emphasised the similarity between men and women as the justification for the need to correct female disadvantage and to allow women full access to organizational arenas. More recent iterations of liberal feminism (influenced by the radical feminist valorisation of female difference) highlight women's difference from men. Women's difference is presented as an asset to organizations while at the same time challenging the unquestioned value which has historically attached to men and the masculine in organization studies. The surface conceptualization of voice places an emphasis on the failure to include female perspectives and demands that we pay attention to women and hear their accounts. One limitation of this type of surface argument is that it is reliant on an assumption of gender-neutral meritocracy. While the women's voice perspective

recognises gender difference, it does not address the process of silencing which we argued

occurs at a deeper level. Neither does it consider the possibility that a challenge to the

masculine ethic identified by Kanter (1977) as attaching to management, will likely lead to a

response from men as they seek to maintain their dominant position as the historically

advantaged group. Understanding such a response can provide us with insight as to why

feminine voices continue to go unheard even within a contemporary context which explicitly

attaches value to the feminine (Simpson and Lewis, 2005, 2007).

Deep Conceptualisations of Voice

Deep conceptualisations of the notion of voice in connection to gender are rooted in

poststructuralist feminism. In contrast to liberal feminism, gender is not located *in* the

person associated with an inner core or essence rather it is understood as the product of a

particular cultural and historical context. Such a context can therefore privilege some

(gender) meanings, interpretations and voices over others signalling that at a deeper level

power processes are at play which mean some voices are heard over others. Contextualising

voice in these terms means understanding that the power to speak and be heard should not

be understood in terms of a possession which is held by a person or group, custody of which

can be taken over or shared by marginalised individuals, as assumed by the women's voice

literature. Rather, power is connected to the concept of discourse which is central to the

idea of "deep" voice. Discourse as a 'historically, socially and institutionally specific

structure of statements, terms, categories and beliefs' (Scott, 1988: 35) defines how we can

think and talk about social practices such as management and organization and such

understandings assert tight control over organizational life (Kerfoot and Knights, 1998).

Discourse asserts a preferred version of the world and this preferred version disqualifies –

silences – competing versions. Discourses define and shape social reality, constituting the world by determining the ways we have to know and talk about it, shaping individuals by influencing our thinking, attitudes and behaviour (Miller, 2008).

Comparing the surface and deep conceptualisations of voice we can see that while gender difference from the perspective of the former is presented as the explanation for (and solution to) women's exclusion, a deep understanding of voice approaches gender difference as the analytical point of departure, concentrating on how discourse constructs difference and how valorisation and suppression of the feminine occur at one and the same time with significant consequences for women's position within contemporary organizations (Simpson and Lewis, 2007). A deep conceptualization of voice demonstrates how the continued dominance of the masculine is predicated on silences with discourses around gender playing a key role in the process that creates and maintains that silence. As we argued (Simpson and Lewis, 2005: 1262) by investigating voice through a poststructuralist "deep" lens, we can move away from understanding voice in terms of a state of absence or neglect towards a position which considers the processes that seek to maintain silence so that the gendered assumptions which negatively impact on women and positively act in favour of men can be uncovered.

Surface conceptualisations of visibility

Connecting liberal feminism to our surface conceptualization of visibility we reviewed literature which highlighted women's exclusion from power and their heightened visibility due to small numbers and their difference from the majority group. Here, concern is centred on increasing the numbers of women in management and leadership roles and while liberal feminism (and its contemporary replacement neo-liberal feminism) may have contributed to

the fast-tracking of careers for *some* women, our review of visibility at a surface level highlighted the difficulties faced by women as tokens. These included performance pressures and the associated fear of making mistakes contributing to overachievement or an attempt to reduce exposure. Additionally, women are often treated as representative of the category "woman" as opposed to being assessed as individuals in their own right. Being judged as representative of a category means that women are approached in stereotypical terms and assigned to a restricted range of constraining roles such as the characters of seductress, mother, pet, iron maiden as identified by Kanter (1977). Women are also faced with heighted career barriers, experience hostile working environments and are subjected to positive and negative responses to being on the one hand not feminine enough and on the other criticised for behaviours and displays which are perceived as excessively feminine.

From a liberal feminist perspective these disadvantages can be assuaged by the creation of a gender-balanced group such that visibility does not mean marginalization from the dominant group or being subject to the controlling gaze of the dominant male. Additionally, our review of the impact of visibility at a surface level, highlighted how being "in view" for women may be detrimental, but in contrast for men, token positions in occupations such as nursing or teaching, mean that they can draw on the privileges associated with masculinity. This occurs through assumptions about enhanced leadership capabilities and heightened commitment to the organisation through a stronger careerist orientation. Thus the experience of token status varies for men and women but for both genders such surface visibility is connected to difference and a state of exclusion whether through choice (men) or coercion (women) (Simpson and Lewis, 2005, 2007). A focus on visibility at a surface level highlights the material consequence of gender segregation within

organisations and its associated numerical disadvantage (for women) when an individual is in the minority. The solution presented is reform of organizations such that women are no longer in a minority position. What this surface focus doesn't take into account is the flawed and gendered nature of organisations and how women are judged against an invisible masculine norm. To consider the latter, we must turn to deep conceptualisations of visibility (Simpson and Lewis, 2005, 2007).

Deep conceptualizations of (in)visibility

Deep conceptualizations of (in)visibility allow us to consider what are the implications of being part of the advantaged gender group of men. Significant here is that one of the main privileges attached to being a man is that gender does not have to be thought about, worried about or noticed in everyday life. The insignificance of gender for men is largely due to them representing the normative standard case. As discussed at the beginning of this paper, masculinity retains power because it is has historically been impervious to analysis, particularly within the context of the management and organization studies field (Collinson and Hearn, 1994). The consequence of this as suggested above is that unlike women, the invisibility that men experience is representative of a strong presence in that it emanates from the translucence that accompanies the norm (Simpson and Lewis, 2005, 2007). Being invisible in this deep sense means evading the scrutiny and interrogation that is associated with being different from the norm i.e. the *female* manager or the *female* entrepreneur. Deep invisibility means representing humanity - being the "bearers of a body transcendent universal personhood" (Butler, 1999: 14 cited in Simpson and Lewis, 2005: 1264) – thereby avoiding essentialization and categorization. Nevertheless, while men benefit from deep invisibility by being associated with disembodied normativity, the

invisible norm of masculinity is regularly subject to contestation and ongoing struggle as marginalised groups challenge the dominant position. Within the field of management and organization studies, one significant challenge has come from the process of feminization but challenges to the norm of management around race and ethnicity are now also evident. "As Robinson suggests, while white men have resisted the process of 'marking', they have been partly decentred (removed from their occupancy of the norm) and this has helped to increase the visibility of both gender and race" (Simpson and Lewis, 2005: 1264).

In revisiting this framework of surface and deep conceptualizations of voice and visibility, I am reminded of a story Ruth told me about an experience she had in a university she worked in before coming to Brunel. One day Ruth was sitting in her office looking out the window and from the position she was in, she was able to see into another office in a different building. She saw a man standing over a woman seated at a desk and he appeared to be gesticulating and shouting at this woman. Ruth decided to intervene and was able to find out the extension number of the telephone on that desk and phoned it. When the "angry" man picked up the phone Ruth simply said "I see you" while he frantically looked around trying to locate the source of the call. "I see you" sums up for me what we were seeking to do in reviewing the gender and organization literature through voice and visibility – to show the diverse ways in which these concepts are used, to develop a rich understanding of gender processes in organizations and to signal to those who occupy the norm that "we see you" – you are no longer invisible.

The (In)visibility Vortex

Our original consideration of the concepts of voice and visibility sought to draw out their complexities by differentiating between surface and deep understandings based on a review

of existing gender literature. At the surface level the focus was on numbers while at the deeper level attention was directed at the power dynamics implicated in maintaining and challenging the norm. In moving forward with this work we edited a text entitled *Revealing and Concealing Gender: Issues of Visibility in Organizations* published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2010, which presented a range of new empirical studies which specifically focused on (in)visibility processes. In the context of this book, we developed the framework of the (In)visibility Vortex which represents a poststructuralist perspective as it is underpinned by poststructuralist principles and a poststructuralist understanding of power (Lewis and Simpson, 2010, 2012). The aim of the (In)visibility Vortex is to explicate the processes and practices of visibility and invisibility both inside and outside the norm and to provide a means of illuminating how different forms of (in)visibility are lived out and managed in day-to-day organizational life (Lewis and Simpson, 2010, 2012). We adopted the concept of a vortex as we felt this communicated the unceasing turbulence and insecurity that surrounds the norm both within and outside the dominant centre. As we stated (Lewis and Simpson, 2010: 9-10):

> A vortex is a flow, usually in a spiral motion around a centre. The speed of rotation and the level of turbulence are greatest at the centre and decrease progressively with distance towards the margins…..(The) norm can be seen to be a site of agitation and defensive action as individuals and groups seek to maintain the invisibility of their privileged state….preserve the status quo (and) struggle to suppress alternative interpretations…..(The) closer individuals or groups lie in relation to the norm, the more likely they are to secure access to its privileges. Effective challenges are therefore likely to emanate from those closest to the centre….The concept of the

vortex therefore captures the turbulence and insecurity that occurs both within and immediately outside the centre – the latter in the form of challenges to the norm and the processes of revealing its privileged status.

We took this description of the vortex and developed a graphical representation of the processes that occur around the norm. Our first iteration of the (In)visibility Vortex can be found in Lewis and Simpson (2010), page 10. This captures the dynamics of movement around (in)visibility and how these play out in both the centre and the margins. Processes around the norm are focused on the maintenance of invisibility with the aim of concealing privilege and advantage and preserving the status quo. Preventing change and alteration requires the power to control the day-to-day work practices of an organization while also maintaining influence over definitions and meanings such that alternative understandings are suppressed. However, despite these efforts it is important to acknowledge that the power to conceal and preserve the dominant norm is fragile and insecure, requiring an ability to differentiate between strategic and tactical threats and to purposefully respond through manipulation and political contrivances if required. As we argued (Lewis and Simpson, 2010) – such manoeuvres involve turbulent ebb and flow as encapsulated in the notion of the vortex.

Turning to the movement which occurs outside the centre and the form (in)visibility takes in the margins, we identified three processes of revelation, exposure and disappearance. Within the context of the vortex we suggest that potentially there is a flow which begins with processes of revelation where those in the margins reveal normative practices and discourses. In so doing, individuals in the margins challenge these dominant behaviours and values which from the perspective of gender privilege masculinity. What the

empirical studies in our edited text demonstrated is that challenging the norm is not easy and risks exposure, which is the second process identified in the Vortex and located in the margins. In revealing the privileges that attach to the norm and the association between advantage and masculinity, those in the margins risk drawing attention to alterity and being categorised as Other through the moniker *female* leader, *female* manager, *female* academic, *female* lawyer etc. Here, challenge and revelation lead to exposure and visibility as different from the norm, risking counter-attack and counter-challenge from those at the centre who wish to preserve their dominant position.

Visibility can also be chosen and not just imposed and being different from the norm can be valued for its alternative positioning. Nevertheless, despite the value which may attach to being unorthodox and therefore visible, occupying the position of Other is not always desirable. Negative experiences and simple dislike of alterity can encourage individuals to disappear – the third process on the margins of the vortex – which though reducing the demands of visibility can also symbolise cultural devaluation and a lack of worth. In contrast, an alternative understanding of disappearance is that vanishing from view can be strategically valuable in that it may allow entrance into and invisibility within the norm. Thus as we argued: "Disappearance can be a strategic choice (to overcome Otherhood; to exploit invisibility and alterity; to enter the invisible norm) or an act of self-exclusion in response to perceived disadvantage" (Lewis and Simpson, 2010: 13).

The concept of the vortex conveys a constant sense of turmoil and agitation with the processes of concealing and preservation within the norm, and revelation, exposure and disappearance in the margins, signalling the never-ending activity associated with the maintenance of power by the historically advantaged and the countervailing challenge from

those associated with alterity. While we presented these processes as a flow which moves from revelation of privilege to exposure as other and disappearance as a strategic response or choice to vanish, we also acknowledged that these processes are not always sequential or discrete with for example individuals often being simultaneously visible and invisible within organizational contexts.

We developed the (In)visibility Vortex further through a re-reading of Kanter's (1977) pioneering text *Men and Women of the Corporation* in a paper published in the *International Journal of Management Reviews* in 2012. While Kanter argued from a liberal feminist perspective, that the (discriminatory) tokenism processes women experienced in the company she studied ('Indsco') were due to numerical imbalances and as such were inherently gender neutral, viewed through the poststructuralist lens of the vortex we argued that these processes were not gender neutral and were instead "…motivated by the exigencies of masculine behaviours and gendered power" (Lewis and Simpson, 2012: 148). Re-reading Kanter's work through the lens of the vortex we interpreted her account of 'Indsco' through the (in)visibility processes of preservation, concealment, revelation, exposure and disappearance. We suggested that Kanter's identification of the (male) majority group could be understood as a dominant centre characterised by an invisible masculine norm and while she argued that the processes of homosocial and homosexual reproduction she identified were due to the uncertainty which attaches to management, we interpreted these processes from a poststructuralist perspective as connected to struggles around the norm. Privilege was concealed from the secretaries who worked at the centre with their bosses through discourses which emphasised notions of personal service and loyalty, framing the secretary as a subordinate Other, thereby keeping them remote from lines of authority where

privilege would be visible. At the margins, revelation is not only possible via secretaries who enter into the centre but also from female managers who wish to access the privileges enjoyed by their male colleagues. However, as discussed above, to enter from the margins and consequently challenge the masculine domain is to emphasise the difference of the female manager which can be constraining due to the expectation of women's take-up of traditional gender roles, or alternatively can be used strategically to effect change. Nevertheless, Kanter also considered how women under pressure from relentless scrutiny also sought social invisibility through conservative dress, working from home or keeping silent in meetings, thereby seeking to disappear within the margins – with other women pursuing strategic invisibility by distancing themselves from damaging femininity.

In applying the (In)visibility Vortex to Kanter's ground-breaking text, we were able to consider again the complexities surrounding the way in which the different forms of visibility and invisibility are lived out, experienced day-to-day and managed on an on-going basis and we revised the (In)visibility Vortex – see Lewis and Simpson (2012). This refined version of the Vortex places a stronger emphasis on the turbulence around the norm as those at the margins try to penetrate and subvert its domain and as the counter pressure of the norm seeks to resist any material and discursive intrusions. Additionally, looking at the margins, through revision of the Vortex, we sought to provide a more nuanced account of challenges to and opposition against the norm. Thus, revelation can mean a targeted and explicit challenge to the practices and values of the norm. Alternatively, by simply being present within the centre, women can offer an alternative which can subvert and confront dominant norms. Likewise, exposure can be experienced positively or negatively: it can be abject and dismal, brandished as pleasurable or be used strategically to bring about change. Finally,

disappearance can take a number of forms including withdrawal as women take-up non-strategic roles, erasure if invisibility is imposed or incorporation if women themselves seek to enter the invisible norm (Lewis and Simpson, 2012). By revising the (In)visibility Vortex we sought to develop a framework which could support explorations of some of the contemporary issues prevalent in the Gender and Organization Studies field. These include demonstrating how the focus on increasing the numbers of women on Boards of Directors is only a partial "solution" to gender disadvantage; uncovering hidden forms of gendered power; exposing the mechanics of segregation in terms of the robustness, uncertainty and invisibility of the norm and the way in which normalizing discursive practices such as 'natural sexual difference' or the 'agentic woman' maintain and disguise gendered processes; and bringing out into the open the way in which multiple forms of visibility and invisibility are embedded in the day-to-day interactions, experiences and strategies of those on the margins. Finally, the (In)visibility Vortex can help us challenge the claims of postfeminism that gender inequality has been "solved" and is no longer a concern for today's women. What the vortex brings to the fore is that there is a constant battle for normative priority and status waged at the discursive level, with the aim of concealing ongoing privilege and advantage, while at the same time "encouraging" the disadvantaged to understand continued inequality as a consequence of their own choices or their own lack of agency. As we argued (Lewis and Simpson, 2012: 154): "…the Vortex offers a way of connecting the individual to organizational processes, discourses and cultural norms so that what may be seen as personal choices and capabilities can be positioned within, and understood in the context of, broader practices and discursive regimes". By highlighting the uncertain path to gender equality through a focus on the struggles around the norm, we make clear how the battle for gender equality is unlikely to end.

Conclusion

According to Calas and Smircich (1999) the emergence of poststructuralist feminism within the GOS field has effected and changed all of us as gender scholars even if we don't always work out of this perspective. As Ruth and I met in poststructuralist feminism so-to-speak, I would like to echo the sentiments of Calas and Smircich by adding that working with Ruth has also changed and impacted on me as an academic. A question Ruth often asked is: "Patricia, you must have something up your sleeve?" as I frantically "patted" my arms and responded "no, there's nothing there!" Through this inquiry Ruth signalled the need to always think about your next academic paper while writing the current one and that this is the way by which you sustain an academic career over the course of your working life. Additionally, I learned the value of courage not only in writing but also in the context of working in a university where raising issues about organizational practices, particularly in relation to gender, is as important as researching them.

Ruth is great fun and when I look back over the years I have worked with her I remember various events such as the time she suggested I get into a packing case just to "see if I would fit" and while I knocked on the lid asking "can I get out now, I am very busy?", Ruth discussed with a colleague where best to move me. I remember playing table football with her in the Brunel University Student Union, whooping and hollering as we sought to beat the male colleague who was with us. Finally, I remember how she saved a frog from my cat while we were working on a paper at my house. We were sitting at the kitchen table and kept hearing a recurring squeak outside the window. I looked out the door and saw a frog sitting beside Charlie the cat and every couple of seconds Charlie hit the frog on the head with her paw and the frog squeaked. Ruth came to the rescue and asked what should we do with the frog? I suggested that we throw it over the fence into my neighbour's pond.

We went out into the garden and while I peeked over the fence to make sure the neighbours were out, Ruth (who had already wrapped the frog in a cloth) went up the steps at the back of the garden. When I gave the "all clear", Ruth swung the cloth with the frog in it, as if she was throwing the hammer at the Olympics, and the frog could be seen flying through the air legs akimbo. Upon hearing a gentle splash we knew the frog had landed safely in the pond at the other side of my neighbour's garden. The rescue complete, we went back to working on our paper.

Ruth is a generous colleague and friend who is willing to share her research resources and support colleagues as they negotiate their way through academic life. In this, I think she is "different from the norm" as many Professors are not always inclined or able to provide such encouragement. Working with Ruth is always fun and productive and I am a better academic for knowing her.

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