Kanter Revisited: Gender, Power and (In)Visibility

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9 to 5, for service and devotion
You would think that I
Would deserve a fair promotion
Want to move ahead
But the boss won't seem to let me
I swear sometimes that man is out to get me
(Dolly Parton, '9 to 5', 1981)

Introduction

This paper reviews Kanter's (1977) influential work *Men and Women of the Corporation* and seeks to demonstrate how, through a post-structuralist lens, hidden dimensions of gendered power can be revealed. We develop a conceptual framework around an '(In)visibility Vortex' to highlight the turbulent nature of these power relations and to frame the processes through which gendered hierarchies are perpetuated and concealed. A need to develop ways of surfacing current, more latent manifestations of gender based advantage and disadvantage reflects recent tendencies towards 'gender denial' and the view that the problem of gender in organizations has been 'solved' (Lewis and Simpson, 2010a). We highlight how a re-reading of classic texts can form the basis of new analyses that can have profound contemporary significance.

Written at a time when women were largely absent from the ranks of management, Kanter was one of the first authors to put gender 'on the map' in terms of understanding the dynamics of organizational behaviour. Translated into several languages and with over a million copies sold, this pioneering text has had far-reaching influence, in particular on early women-in-management research (e.g. Henning and Jardin, 1979; Marshall, 1984; Nicholson and West, 1988; Spencer and Podmore, 1992). However, while Kanter's work has been and continues to be extensively cited, we suggest there has been an understatement of its impact and of its potential to develop new understandings of gender in a contemporary context - largely due to its liberal feminist roots. Drawing on post-structuralist theorizing, specifically a perspective that foregrounds issues of (in)visibility and power, we revisit Kanter's classic work in order to surface aspects of gendered hierarchical relations that are present but unrecognised in her text and argue that this re-reading can help us understand manifestations of gendered organizational practices today.

As a seminal text, *Men and Women of the Corporation* is normally characterised as representing a liberal feminist perspective due to certain characteristics (Calas and Smircich, 1996; Halford et al, 1997; Halford and Leonard, 2001; Witz and Savage, 1992). These include her emphasis on the underlying similarity between men and women. In this respect, while she draws attention to the gender of organizational members, she does not see fundamentally different gendered modes of behaviour. Thus, organizations are 'accidentally' (Halford et al, 1997: 7) as opposed to *inherently* gendered. Further, from her perspective, what looks like gender differences are in fact differences in power (Witz and Savage, 1992) derived largely from the continued operation of outmoded beliefs, customs and prejudices. These help construct women

as 'unsuitable' for the contemporary workplace (Halford and Leonard, 2001) – attitudes which, with appropriate policies, can be 'managed out'. This liberal feminist position is reflective of a 'politics of optimism' whereby gender differences can be eradicated allowing women to advance on a non-conflictual basis and inciting little response from men (Blum and Smith, 1988; Childs and Krook, 2008).

In contrast to liberal feminism, organizational actors from a poststructuralist perspective are not understood to be individualised beings with an inner core or essence. Rather they are the product of the particular cultural and historical context in which they live. In consequence, poststructuralism conceives of 'organization' as a *socially situated practice* with individuals involved in socially situated activities. Following this, gendered relations are understood as deeply embedded and continually acted out within organizational contexts (Halford et al, 1997: 13). Accordingly, unlike liberal feminism which sees enactments of gender as an anomaly within organizations, post-structuralism understands such performances as the *reality* of organizational life – a reality which cannot simply be 'managed out'.

This approach lends itself to an understanding of the gendered nature of organizational processes and practices - largely denied in Kanter's text. This denial can be partly located in her (liberal feminist) focus on the numerical composition of management teams - together with her associated analysis of the detrimental effects of heightened visibility from numerical minority status. This focus is prevalent today and can be seen in current preoccupations with increasing the number of women in senior management and board room positions. Work in this area has drawn on notions of numerical balance, 'insider-outsider ratios' and 'contagion effects' (Huse, 2005;

Mateos de Cabo et al, 2011; Terjesen et al, 2009). However, research suggests that an elite cadre of male directors continues to maintain a significant grip on organizational power (Singh and Vinnicombe, 2004) - indicating that a focus on numerical balance can overlook what is referred to as the 'black box of the boardroom' (Terjesen et al, 2009: 333) that conceals ongoing systems of gendered privilege. Following the above, we argue that by re-reading *Men and Women of the Corporation* through a poststructuralist lens, as opposed to its conventional liberal feminist positioning, we can expose and explain some of these often hidden dimensions.

We encapsulate this lens in the notion of the (In)visibility Vortex (Lewis and Simpson, 2010a). This conceptualises key gendered processes of visibility, invisibility and power which we suggest are present in Kanter's work. We accordingly articulate what is present, but also marginalised and unsaid, in her text and reveal the insights her work offers towards a more profound understanding of the implications of (in)visibility for the maintenance and perpetuation of gendered power. The intellectual ground work for the (In)visibility Vortex began in an edited collection: *Revealing and Concealing Gender: Issues of Visibility in Organizations,* (Lewis and Simpson, 2010a). This sought, through a series of theoretical and empirical chapters, to draw attention to the often contradictory ways in which visibility and invisibility 'play out' in organizations and to expose the unseen and gendered processes of organizing that are buried within norms, practices and values. A vortex is a flow, usually in spiral motion, around a centre. The speed of rotation and the level of turbulence are greater at the centre and decrease progressively with distance towards the margins. This, we argue, captures the instability and dynamics of the norm or 'dominant centre', the site of formations of (gendered) power, as well as the politics

of the margins from where the privileges of the centre are resisted and revealed. The Vortex framework highlights key processes inside and outside the norm – how power is *preserved* and *concealed* within the dominant centre as well as how, from the margins, women can *reveal* the privileges of the centre, can in the process be *exposed* as Other and in response can be erased or seek to *disappear.*

In rereading her work, we focus mainly on Kanter's well known theory of tokenism which considers the implications of numerical advantage and disadvantage in organizations, referred to above, and the problems associated with the visibility of minority groups. In so doing, we elaborate and develop the (In)visibility Vortex, our lens in this endeavour, and provide it with theoretical and empirical weight that can take it beyond the original edited collection in which it was first proposed. Our paper is organised as follows: we outline Kanter's theory of tokenism and the dynamics of numerical advantage and disadvantage. Following this we present an account of how poststructuralist understandings conceptualise the links between visibility, invisibility and power. We then discuss the gendered processes, illuminated through the Vortex, which can be identified from her work. In conclusion we further refine and develop the framework, highlighting its usefulness for demonstrating processes of visibility and invisibility in contemporary organizations. Further, we identify future research areas where this framework can be utilized as a means of drawing out the gendered complexities of organizational life.

Kanter and Issues of Visibility

In *Men and Women of the Corporation*, Kanter (1977) sought to examine how, through her study of 'Indsco', numerical group composition could impact on organizational group processes. A central claim of her theory is that group

proportions are connected to social experiences and that as these proportions change, so do the work interactions of individual group members (Gustafson, 2008). Here she devised a typology of majority-minority distributions with four specific types: uniform groups containing one noteworthy social type i.e. with a ratio of 100: 0; skewed groups characterised by a predominance of one social type with a ratio of 85: 15; tilted groups with a more moderate distribution of social types demonstrated by a 65: 35 ratio; and finally balanced groups with a more even distribution with ratios of 60 : 40 or 50 : 50.

Focusing on the 'skewed' group, she considered what happens to women who occupy the position of 'token' within a peer group of men. In particular she explored the implications of visibility and difference for inter group relations and for the subjective state of members of the minority. She argued that the majority male members of the group, which she referred to as 'dominants', control and determine the group and its culture. As the 'dominants' (men) develop a heightened sensitivity to the visible minority status of 'tokens' (women), three particular challenges emerge for token individuals. First, their heightened visibility means that they are subject to performance pressures which require that they either over achieve or seek to reduce their exposure. Second, they become isolated as 'dominants' emphasise their own commonalities while highlighting the token's difference (particularly the case with informal activities). Third, distortion of the social characteristics of 'tokens' according to dominants' own stereotypical beliefs sets up a situation of 'role entrapment' whereby women are forced into a limited number of work positions. These perpetuate stereotypes, restricting prospects for progression and continuing to

set women apart from the dominant group of men (Childs and Krook, 2008;

Chambliss and Uggen, 2000; Gustafson, 2008).

Kanter's work has generated a stream of research within gender and organizational studies with her tokenism theory being tested in a variety of work contexts. This body of research includes union representatives (Izraeli, 1983); elite law firms (Chambliss and Uggen, 2000); Wall Street professionals (Roth, 2004); male nurses (Heikes, 1991; Simpson, 2004, 2005); women managers (Blum and Smith, 1988; Lyness and Thompson, 2000; Maddock, 1999; Marshall, 1994; Powney, 1997; Simpson, 1997, 2000); women on corporate boards (Elstad and Ladegard, 2010; Mateos de Cabo et al, 2011; Seierstad and Opsahl, 2011; Singh and Vinnicombe, 2004); male flight attendants (Young and James, 2001); female legislators (Bratton, 2005; Childs and Krook, 2008; Crowley, 2004; Towns, 2003); and police officers (Martin, 1994; Gustafson, 2008). As with Kanter's work, this research demonstrates how visibility can have negative consequences for women through performance pressures, heightened career barriers and the creation of a hostile working environment as well as through strong social constraints on behaviours in social interactions. Tokens may accordingly respond in ways that help to reduce the effects of visibility – from keeping a low profile to attempts to become assimilated into the world of men (Lewis, 2006). Visibility is therefore largely associated with a negative state of exclusion and difference (Simpson and Lewis, 2005; 2007).

From a liberal feminist perspective, such disadvantages can be overcome by an increase in numbers of women in organizations and hence a more gender balanced group. As Kanter argues, where a skewed group becomes a tilted group, a shift in

group dynamics occurs, leading to a reduction in the visibility of the minority - mitigating feelings of psychological discomfort and creating an accepting culture. This situation would lead to a change in women's behaviour in a number of ways: alliances can be established between women impacting on the culture of the group as a whole and minority members can establish themselves as individuals as opposed to representatives of the social category of 'woman'. Further, while an increase in number is required for supportive alliances to develop, she also suggests that 'women-identified-women' (i.e. women who identify with other women) are important if the impact of token effects is to be reduced or removed (Childs and Krook, 2008). Under lying these changes is an assumption of solidarity behaviour whereby women see the increasing of their number as their personal responsibility (Mavin, 2008). However, research indicates that senior women prefer to be recognised for their individual abilities as opposed to being seen as representatives of their gender category. Further, the anticipation of solidarity does not acknowledge the gendered context of work and organizations - a context which may encourage senior women who perceive themselves to be non-prototypical, to distance themselves from their female colleagues (Ellemers et al, 2004; Mavin, 2006, 2008).

As the above suggests, Kanter (along with the liberal feminist perspective in general) has been criticised for the weight given to numerical proportions. Despite references made to gender in tokenism theory, Kanter removes its impact from her analysis by asserting that 'rarity and scarcity rather than femaleness per se….shaped the environment for women' (Kanter, 1977: 207). Associated with this position, she conceptualises power as 'the ability to get things done' (Kanter, 1977: 166), divorcing it from considerations of gender and from masculine values and practices. Power

differences accordingly emanate not from gendered hierarchies but from differences in job attributes and organizational (e.g. opportunity) structures, so that the problem of women in managerial roles 'spring into focus as problems of powerlessness, not sex' (Kanter, 1977: 6). From Kanter's perspective, both men and women can expect to experience similar token effects when they are in a minority within an organizational context as '…the same pressures and processes can occur around people of any social category who find themselves few of their kind among others of a different social type' (Kanter, 1977: 240).

However as many have subsequently argued, Kanter's approach overlooks a gender bias that favours masculinity as a source of cultural priority and relative advantage within organizational structures, processes and procedures (Alvesson and Due Billing, 1992; Childs and Krook, 2008; Collinson and Hearn, 1995; Gustafson, 2008; Heikes, 1991; Yoder, 1991, 2002; Zimmer, 1988). Research which has considered how men and women differentially experience the visibility of token status (e.g. Cross and Bagilhole, 2002; Lupton, 2000; Simpson, 2000, 2004, 2005; Williams, 1993) has demonstrated how men are less likely to face negative consequences compared to their female counterparts. Williams (1993) and later Simpson (2004, 2005) found that men working in the female dominated occupations of nursing, teaching and librarianship enjoyed enhanced career opportunities and rode a 'glass escalator' to the top. As Yoder (1991) points out, if the experiences of token women and men diverge so much that the negative consequences of tokenism extend only to women, then what Kanter regarded as the result of numbers has as its basic, root cause sexism – the denigration of women as women. Therefore, numbers alone cannot create equality

because other social and cultural factors which privilege the masculine and devalue the feminine intervene (Zimmer, 1988; Childs and Krook, 2008; Gustafson, 2008).

Overall while *Men and Women of the Corporation* was ground breaking in its analysis, and while Kanter's work included gender at a descriptive level in its outline of certain gender typed behaviours, it did not draw on gender as a framework of analysis. However, we argue that gender dynamics and a more profound analysis of gendered power can be identified from her research. Specifically through the framework of the (In)visibility Vortex and its associated poststructuralist lens, we show how visibility and invisibility as well as the struggles around the normative position are implicated in the way power is reproduced and maintained.

Poststructuralism: Power, the Norm and the (In)Visibility Vortex

One key difference between liberal feminism and poststructuralist feminism is the way in which these two perspectives understand the issue of power. In developing a liberal feminist analysis, Kanter, as stated above, understands power as essentially the ability to get things done or to realize one's will. Further she believes there is a fixed amount of power circulating within organizations and that women's token position impacts on their ability to secure access to power with men possessing 'more than their fair share' (Halford and Leonard, 2001). Within the context of 'balanced groups', as she argues, the influence of outmoded behaviour, outlined earlier, is significantly reduced and men and women can secure equal access to organizational power (Witz and Savage, 1992).

In contrast, from a poststructuralist perspective and drawing on the work of Foucault (1991), power is not a 'thing' that can be held by or belong to any particular

individual or group - or comprise a fixed amount to be either 'taken over' or 'shared out'. Rather power is connected to the notion of discourse. This refers to a system of knowledge which provides us with a '…whole way of *constituting* the world through the ways we have to know and talk about it…..discourses do not describe or represent 'the real'; they bring realities (including who we are) into being' (Miller, 2008: 252). Within the context of *Men and Women of the Corporation* power as a discursive relation is centred around circulating discourses of gender based on notions of 'natural' sexual variation, which place men and women in subject and object positions. Men and women in 'Indsco' are 'made subject' through these discourses while at the same time they are also *subjected* i.e. constructed as objects of power. Thus who an individual is, '…is not an unchanging essence but rather a shifting product of power…' (Miller, 2008: 257). Significant here is the possibility of resistance. Male power is not unilaterally imposed on women - rather the relationship between men and women involves strategies and counter strategies of power (Witz and Savage, 1992). In this way, the 'oppressed' are never entirely powerless. Power is accordingly highly mobile and influenced by changing associations and circumstances. In other words power moves around through different individuals and groups - though certain people or factions may have greater opportunities to influence how power is played out (Danaher et al, 2002). Associated with this notion of power are two specific disciplinary techniques: surveillance and normalizing judgements both of which produce a complex play of visibility and invisibility in the manufacture and maintenance of power (Danaher et al, 2002; Miller, 2008). Through these two disciplinary techniques, power circulates in capillary fashion within a social context such as an organization, making it difficult to pinpoint its source in terms of a particular category or group (Miller, 2008).

Visibility, Power and the 'Gaze'

Foucault (1991) refers to the notion of power outlined above as 'disciplinary power', arguing that its associated techniques can be used by any institution. A key invention which facilitated the emergence of disciplinary power is Bentham's Panopticon which captured the relationship between visibility, power and subjectivity. Focusing on the issue of the control of convicts, Bentham's model consisted of a tower placed in a central position within a prison, from which guards would be able to observe every prisoner in every cell. However, the Panopticon was designed in such a way that prisoners could never be sure whether they were under observation - but through the possibility of scrutiny at any moment they would adjust their behaviour accordingly (Danaher et al, 2002). According to McHoul and Grace, panopticism is the 'exemplary technique through which disciplinary power is able to function (as) it relies on surveillance and the internal training this produces to incite states of docility' (McHoul and Grace, 1993: 67). In a contemporary context, this authoritative gaze need no longer be incorporated into an external edifice but can be institutionalised and projected through internal systems and procedures of surveillance and assessment where, through frames of classification, codification and measurement (Townley, 1992), power and knowledge are constituted and maintained. Further, the gaze is a way for individuals to look at their own behaviours i.e. individuals can be the subject of their own gaze (Danaher et al, 2002).

According to Danaher et al (2002), there is a gender dimension to the authority of the gaze in that it is saturated with the male values of objectification, patriarchy and phallocentrism (Snow, 1989; Tyler and Abbott, 1998). In *Men and Women of the Corporation,* Kanter (1977) suggests that heightened visibility and practices of

surveillance can push token women, through processes of assimilation, into gendered stereotypes, defined by dominant men. These include the role of 'seductress' or sex object which focuses on a woman's sexuality and which demands that women behave in recognisably 'feminine' ways; the 'mother' whereby women are seen to represent an ethic of care - impeding their ability to perform a leadership role; the 'pet' which perceives a woman as a non-threatening 'cheerleader' and mascot for her male colleagues while the final stereotype of the 'iron maiden' is applied to a woman who in a bid to appear competent may exhibit too many masculine traits and who is often criticised for being insufficiently feminine.

These stereotypical, constraining 'role traps', in their different embodiments of femininity, contain limited behavioural repertoires of influence and power and are accompanied by strong sanctions, in the form of marginalisation and ridicule, if women step outside of their domains. The 'gaze' can therefore be seen to have a disciplining and normalising effect in that thought (e.g. about the position and characteristics of women) and action are structured into pre-existing norms and categories. The 'gaze' allows a (partial) knowledge to develop, irrespective of individual and personal dispositions, and control (through correction, classification, exclusion) to be exercised over those in view. Though Kanter first identified these stereotypes over thirty years ago, pointing to how they discipline women's behaviour and restrict their access to power, a recent study of media representations of female candidates in the 2008 American presidential election highlighted their continuing significance. Here, both Hilary Clinton and Sarah Palin were subject to gender stereotypes and '…experienced the wrath of a society seemingly afraid to see a woman in power…' (Carlin and Winfrey, 2009: 338).

Invisibility, Power and the Norm

The second technique of disciplinary power identified by Foucault seeks to compare and judge each individual against a standard of normalcy. Each person is evaluated against a culturally based norm and those who cannot meet the required standard are targeted for exclusion, improvement or correction (Miller, 2008). Foucault refers to 'dividing practices' as the means by which an individual's normality is assessed and judgements reached as to whether someone is a 'proper' member of the social order. These 'dividing practices' actively produce problematic identities '…such as the delinquent who serve as the 'Other' against which normality can be measured' (Danaher et al, 2002: 61) or the female manager who is 'Othered' within an organizational context because she differs from the management norm. However while judgements about normality are based on visibility and surveillance, the power of normalisation lies in its *invisibility* as individuals are constituted and re-constituted through discourses (and a gaze) that reflect the accepted and 'taken-for-granted'. Dominant values and entrenched privileges are accordingly reproduced and sustained by discursive formations that, through their wide-scale acceptance, remain unrecognised, unproblematised and hidden from view.

In terms of gender, the invisibility of masculine practices and privileges has been recognised as central to understandings of gender dynamics. As gender theorists have argued (e.g. Collinson and Hearn, 1994; Kaufman, 1994; Robinson, 2000; Whitehead, 2001) men's experiences and subjectivity have been universalised to form objective knowledge, rendering invisible the 'strong presence' and salience of masculinity in organizations. According to Robinson (2000) this invisibility is an essential condition for the maintenance of male dominance. Masculinity is thus a disembodied and

unmarked category, divorced from gender, and '…against which difference is constructed, [masculinity] never has to speak its name, never has to acknowledge its role as an organizing principle in social and cultural relations' (Lipsitz, 1998 cited in Lewis, 2006: 455). Members of a minority group such as token women in Kanter's study are judged by and evaluated against a normative established by the male majority. This is presented as the self-evident standard against which difference is measured, with the connection between the normative and the majority group being invisible. This norm is applied to everyone in a similar manner such that disparities between the majority and minority are illuminated with the latter being marked out as diverging from the normative standard (Lewis, 2006). Within 'Indsco' women's difference from an unacknowledged masculine norm meant that they experienced an 'Othering' and were stereotyped and forced into limited and caricatured work roles which restricted advancement opportunities.

Despite its invisibility, the masculine centre or norm can be seen to be chronically insecure and subject to challenge as individuals from the margins dispute and reveal its privileged status (Haraway, 1991; Puwar, 2004; Robinson, 2000). In the context of gender, women may seek recognition and challenge the privileges of men through resistance strategies and the mobilization of subordinate discourses such as that of femininity. Such resistance will itself be resisted and partly revoked - as demonstrated by the incorporation of discourses of femininity, that have recently infiltrated notions of leadership, into the masculine, so that a re-masculinization of management (e.g. the strategic use of emotions at work) can be seen to have occurred (Fondas, 1997; Lewis and Simpson, 2007; Metcalfe and Linstead, 2003). These 'battles' can be understood as a 'struggle over normativity' in the form of a

contestation of masculinity's cultural and material priority and of its privileged domain (Miller, 2008; Robinson, 2000).

The (In)Visibility Vortex

The nature of power from a poststructuralist perspective outlined above and the disciplinary techniques which attach to it, are encapsulated in the framework of the (In)visibility Vortex (Lewis and Simpson, 2010a). Our contention is that the processes and practices of visibility and invisibility and how they are played out in day-to-day organizational life can be elucidated through this lens. The dynamic which the Vortex represents is resonant with the processes of *Preservation* and *Concealment* that occur within the norm as well as the challenges that take place from outside it. In other words, 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 and to hang on to its material and cultural advantages, while those excluded from this advantaged position seek to challenge this situation of priority. The concept of the Vortex, representative of a poststructuralist perspective, highlights issues relating to the maintenance and reproduction of this (gendered) power whilst also capturing the turbulence and insecurity that surrounds it - through challenges to the norm and the processes of revealing its privileged status.

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The Vortex as presented above additionally captures the dynamics of movement outside the centre and how visibility and invisibility may play out in the margins. There is a flow which potentially moves from *Revelation* (as those in the margins challenge and reveal dominant practices and values) to the resultant *Exposure* (as

through the challenge, individuals render themselves exposed as Other and are marked as visibly different). One outcome is to seek invisibility through acts of self exclusion or to have *Disappearance,* through oversight and neglect, imposed. This preliminary frame, we argue, can help surface, through a rereading, hidden dimensions of Kanter's work. From this perspective, she can be seen to throw light on the processes and struggles around the norm (the strategies and counter strategies to maintain invisibility and to conceal its privileges and power) as well as on the behaviours and practices of the margins that seek to contests its privileged domain. In so doing, we refine and develop the Vortex as an interpretive lens.

Kanter Revisited: Preservation and Concealment within the Norm

In *Men and Women of the Corporation,* Kanter presents tokenism processes as solely due to numerical imbalances and as inherently gender neutral. She also outlines homophily processes which demonstrate a tendency for organizational members to prefer to associate with others who are like themselves (Roth, 2004) - the consequences of which are the exclusion of token women and the continued dominance of majority men. Kanter argues that these homophily processes – the tendency for men to prefer other, similar men - are driven by the uncertainties and insecurities of managerial work. These uncertainties, including vague performance criteria, unstructured tasks and unknown elements in decision making, can be mitigated if fellow managers share the same 'world view'. Viewed through the poststructuralist lens of the Vortex, however, we suggest that these processes are instead motivated by the exigencies of masculine behaviours and gendered power. As we have seen, Kanter's analysis overlooks masculinity and management as sites of power and how that power is reproduced and maintained. Nevertheless, we suggest

that these dynamics are present but unrecognised in her text. We unfold the argument below.

Preservation of Power

Kanter's identification of a majority group referred to as 'dominants' can be understood as a 'dominant centre' which encapsulates an invisible masculine norm. This centre is the site of privilege and power in the form of material and cultural advantage and is supported by hegemonic understandings that serve to both preserve that power and to conceal its benefits. Thus, practices around this dominant centre that, from her perspective, keep control and privilege in the hands of a small and socially homogeneous group and which exclude those who are different (i.e. women), can be seen as part of a process of normalization and an impetus to both *preserve* and *conceal* this centre as a site of masculine privilege and advantage.

Given this, Kanter argues it is inevitable that others will seek to enter the exclusive group of 'dominants' and 'challenge the control by just one kind' (Kanter, 1977: 68). The Vortex and the turbulence it represents, highlights how the norm is a site of insecurity and struggle as the dominant male group seeks to preserve its privilege and power. In this respect Kanter refers to the resultant drawing of boundaries and the defensive 'closing' of the circle. This occurs through the twin homophily processes she identifies (homosexual and homosocial reproduction) which create 'exclusive circles' and a 'kinship system' that excludes women and those men who do not 'fit in'. These processes also support common understandings of the 'rightful' allocation of privilege and power within concealing discourses of inevitability.

In identifying such processes Kanter describes in effect how the dominant centre of male management is preserved. Homosexual and homosocial reproduction support hegemonic understandings of who should (and should not) hold power. As Kanter points out, keeping management positions in the hands of people of 'one's own kind' not only protects privilege and keeps it within a small circle but also, self-fulfillingly, 'provides reinforcement for the belief that people like oneself actually deserve to have such authority' (Kanter, 1977: 62-63). The drawing of boundaries between the centre and the margins through these twin processes accordingly helps to sustain and preserve privilege through the development of a self sustaining justificatory logic. The very difficulty that women encounter in terms of entering the centre can be taken, reassuringly, as a 'sign of incompetence, a sign that insiders were right to close their ranks' (Kanter, 1977: 68). The few women who are allowed (or pressured) to enter and be incorporated into the norm are expected to align themselves with masculine practices and distance themselves from other women.

These 'integrated' women, referred to by Kanter as 'Queen Bees', act as 'gatekeepers', regulating the movement of other women and their potential to challenge men's dominant status. First identified by Staines et al (1973), Queen Bees are seen as unhelpful to other women. They may be reluctant to promote female colleagues for fear of the negative impact on their careers or out of a desire to remain 'unique' in the organization (Davidson & Cooper, 1992). In this way, Queen Bees can be seen to be underscoring existing gendered configurations of organizational power. In fact, arguing that an equivalent 'Queen Bee' label is not applied to senior men (nor are individual men required to take responsibility for the position of men in management in general), Mavin (2006, 2008) strongly contends that such a

characterization applied to individual women deflects attention from the gendered context of organizations.

By drawing on poststructuralist vocabulary, we can see how a dominant discourse (of male privilege and entitlement) maintains its hegemonic status through normalisation – by appearing to be inevitable and 'right' and by both supporting and being supported by appropriate behaviours and practices (e.g. preference given to men; 'gate-keeping' activities of 'Queen Bees'). Thus while Kanter explains homosocial and homosexual reproduction in terms of a need to overcome the uncertainties inherent in managerial positions, she also gives inference to (but does not name) the struggles around the norm: how dominant discourses (of management; of masculinity) retain their power by appearing as inevitable and 'common sense'; how such discourses and associated 'ways of doing' marginalise and suppress alternatives (e.g. femininity); and how (e.g. excessively masculine) behaviours are normalised thereby reflecting and supporting their assumptions and understandings.

Concealment of Privilege

As we have seen, the preservation of power involves the ability to conceal its privilege so that entitlement is normalised and appears routine (Simpson and Lewis, 2005, 2007). However as Kanter tellingly notes, the need for concealment is more pressing in dealings with those closest to the centre. Such individuals see first-hand 'how the other half live' and can potentially question and challenge its privileged status. The practices of concealment are evident in Kanter's account of the gendered dynamic of the boss-secretary relationship. Firmly located in the margins, their low salary a 'material marker' for this position, secretaries are nevertheless close to and hence aware of the rewards of the dominant centre through their relationship with

their manager boss. As Kanter argues, a relationship based on fealty (i.e. a demand for personal loyalty) and emotional gain based on principles of arbitrariness (the absence of limits on managerial discretion) serves to facilitate acceptance of inequitable status and to suppress resentments of the differential rewards between the two groups. Drawing on Weberian notions of patrimony as governance based on 'ruler's personal household and private property' (Kanter, 1977: 73), personalised expectations meant that secretaries were 'bound' to bosses 'in ways that were largely unregulated by rules of the larger system.

As Kanter points out, unlike other positions where contact with those much lower down the hierarchy (and vice versa) is limited, secretaries have close daily interaction with their bosses and hence have access to the 'real story' behind public presentations – a knowledge that can potentially (and embarrassingly) trigger unfavourable evaluations and reveal inequitable differential rewards. These rewards relate not just to salary but to levels of autonomy, career opportunities and access to space and mobility. As Kanter argues, it was important for the maintenance and legitimacy of the system that secretaries do not become resentful of these material differences and of their disadvantaged position. From a poststructuralist perspective, maintenance and legitimacy of these differentials require the manufacture of identities derived from discourses which support the system of power and which frame a subordinate Other. Discourses of personal loyalty and devotion supported by practices based on expectations of personal service (secretaries frequently performed mundane/domestic tasks for their boss) were thus activated to keep secretaries remote from systems of authority – where lines of privilege are highly visible and where the dominant have an interest in obscuring discrepancies in rewards and power. By assigning an abject

status of servility to secretaries (beyond that which was strictly required by the formal job specification), managers not only manufactured a contrasting, super-ordinate managerial identity derived from discourses of loyalty and devotion, but also conferred a subjectivity on the secretary as Other based on lack of authority and power.

While Kanter located these dynamics (in gender neutral) opportunity structures, job functions and 'role relationships', she does acknowledge the potential for those in the margins to challenge the dominant position. Secretaries may accordingly, from their position of proximity, query the inevitability of masculine and managerial priority. Perhaps more pertinently, she points to the need for the 'dominant' to conceal their privileges and, drawing implicitly on post-structuralist thinking, to activate alternative discourses based on the private and the personal in response to this potential threat. Thus, as she points out, bosses had a stake in "suppress(ing) resentments of differential material privileges of bosses and clerical workers by valuing instead the symbolic and emotional rewards of the secretarial job" (Kanter, 1977: 82). Nevertheless as Pringle (1989) writing from a poststructuralist perspective suggests, the boss-secretary relationship should not simply be understood as the bosses 'having' power while the secretaries do not. Rather the secretary has her own 'quiet means of resistance', highlighting that the privileges of the centre and the meanings that attach to that centre are not fully secure and through challenges to men's normative status, may not remain hidden from view.

Overall while positioning these dynamics within a gender neutral organizational structure, the analysis above exposes how Kanter's work highlights both the durability

and the insecurity of the norm: how it conceals gendered practices and processes through normalizing discursive regimes as well as the challenges that are being made to its dominant status. As her work shows, the norm draws defensively on taken for granted discourses and rhetoric to conceal a privileged status and to support hierarchically positioned identities. Preserving order and concealing political intent embedded in practices such as homosocial and homosexual reproduction, therefore requires strategic manoeuvring, surveillance, speed, contrivances, tactics, machinations – in short they involve a turbulent 'ebb and flow'. The Vortex consequently captures and highlights the turmoil and struggles that occur around the norm.

Kanter Revisited: The Margins and Processes of Revelation, Exposure and Disappearance

What of others outside the norm – on the margins or the periphery? How does visibility and invisibility play out in these contexts? We argue here that while the (In)visibility Vortex helps surface the strong association between invisibility and the norm as well as the dynamics (practices, processes, behaviours, rhetoric) that seek to conceal - both visibility *and* invisibility are implicated in different ways within the margins. Thus, as Kanter powerfully demonstrates, women managers stand out as tokens in male dominated roles and are highly visible. They symbolize their category 'woman' and experience material consequences of over-exposure while they are at the same time invisible in terms of authority required for the job. Women may therefore seek invisibility as a coping mechanism – creating spaces where they can remain unnoticed and where, enshrouded in oblivion, they can effectively disappear. Reading Kanter's work through the lens of the (In)visibility Vortex, we can identify three

interrelated processes that take place in the margins. These relate to processes of revelation, exposure and disappearance.

Revelation

In terms of revelation, we have already seen from our discussion of the boss-secretary relationship, the potential for those in the margins to reveal the privileges and advantage of the norm. As discussed above, the closer individuals or groups lie in relation to the norm, the more likely they are to both see and secure access to its privileges (Simpson and Lewis, 2007). Effective challenges are therefore likely to emanate from those closest to that centre – such as from secretaries who have close working contact with male managers or women managers who seek to share the privileges of men. For example, women who were fast-tracked into senior roles through top management sponsorship, by-passing routine and accepted procedures, were often seen as challenging the assumption that career success and competition for top jobs were the preserve of men. From Kanter's analysis, Revelation of privilege (while not named as such) may be overt, taking the form of direct challenge or confrontation, or operate on a less obvious subversive level. The latter could emanate from simple presence as women infiltrate leadership and management positions, bringing in new ways of thinking and doing. 'Habitual modes of practice', illuminated through an alternative and appraising 'reversal of the gaze', may accordingly be subverted and revealed. Thus one woman appraised (and rejected) the behaviour of male colleagues:

> 'I felt like one of the guys for a while. Then I got tired of it. They had crude mouths and were very immature. Finally, when we were all out drinking, I admitted to myself, this is not me. I don't want to play their game' (Kanter, 1977: 226).

Those in the margins, through radical acts, subversive stories and interpersonal relations, can consequently reveal and so challenge normative practices and discourses that give priority to masculinity. Revealing, whether overt or at a more subversive level, can however attract retribution and Kanter highlights some of the difficulties of challenging the norm – how the 'camaraderie of men' and excessive masculine displays frame women as Other, exposed as outside the normative domain.

Exposure

These 'politics of revealing' and the dialectics between revealing and concealing highlight the links between revelation and exposure. To reveal dominant practices for what they are or even to simply enter from the margins and hence challenge the masculine domain is to draw attention to difference and alterity. Women are not seen as managers per se but are defined by their gender ('*female*' manager), 'trapped' through assimilation into constraining stereotypical roles, their characteristics 'distorted to fit the generalisation' (Kanter, 1977: 211). To challenge and reveal is to render oneself visible and exposed – in Foucault's (1991) terms, to be subject to the controlling gaze. The well-known implications of heightened visibility that emerged from Kanter's work are conceptualised as 'life in the limelight', as 'excessive scrutiny' and as the 'symbolic consequences' of representing a category. Women typically experience visibility detrimentally through feelings of abjection, 'self-conscious self-representation', performance pressures and fear of making mistakes.

Some women, however, found positive value in the visible state. They welcomed the 'attention-getting edge' of publicity, flaunting their difference and enjoying their women-only status. Others used visibility and exposure strategically to challenge (and reveal) normative practices and values and to effect change. They accordingly

'seized the chance' on offer through their symbolic status to get included in particular gatherings or task forces. One woman challenged a dress code by deliberately wearing trousers as she walked through an office of clerical assistances whose male supervisor insisted they wear dresses. She also let it be known that she was leaving at 4pm once a week to attend ballet lessons, fully aware that this would cause ridicule among men (even though they routinely did the same to play golf). As Davies and Thomas (2004) have similarly demonstrated, individuals can use visibility and difference to challenge the status quo – rejecting the subjectivising effects of competitive masculine discourses to present 'trailblazing' identities that dispute current practices and champion different ways of doing. To be visible therefore is not always to be exploited or abject, the subject of a Foucauldian pathological and subjectifying gaze (Yar, 2003). Instead the gaze can be a source of pleasure so that difference can be flaunted and enjoyed. Moreover, in some contexts exposure is to be epistemologically advantaged, allowing individuals to do and say things that are otherwise denied (Davies and Thomas, 2004).

Disappearance

Despite this, in many contexts visibility as Other is a problematic state of alterity. As Kanter argues, one response is to seek invisibility – to overcome abjection and to disappear. Thus, some women opted for '*withdrawal*'. They strove for social invisibility through conservative dress, avoiding controversy or high profile meetings. They sought out spaces (e.g. accepting routine projects, working from home) where they could effectively disappear. There was however a price to pay in that invisibility, through its symbolism of lack of worth and negation (Tyler and Cohen, 2010), meant that aspects of women's performance could also disappear. In these respects, disappearance as *'erasure'* is imposed. This can be seen in the 'role traps'

Kanter identified from her research, where individuality is obliterated through assimilation into stereotypically based categorizations. Further, through the 'tokenism eclipse', a focus on physical appearance blots out aspects of women's performance such as leadership or technical abilities. Whilst visible as exceptions, women can be ignored in their divisions and overlooked in reward allocations. In short, under these circumstances, their skills, aptitudes and contributions can be erased.

However, in contrast to this first type of invisibility within the margins, there are other women who may seek to strategically disappear. As Lewis (2006) found in the context of female entrepreneurs, some women may attempt to separate from damaging femininity and, in poststructuralist terms, to evade the marking of their bodies as 'women entrepreneurs' in order to be seen, like men, as entrepreneurs per se. As we have seen, from Kanter's (1977: 230) account, those referred to as 'Queen Bees' strive to become 'insiders' and, being interpreted as having 'turned against their own social category', are perceived to behave like men. This may be based on a recognition of the power of masculinity (and those who personify and symbolize it) to represent maleness as a universal, unexamined disembodied norm which excludes and marks outsiders. Thus viewed through the lens of the Vortex, the actions of these women can be understood not as 'betrayal' or 'self-aggrandisement' as the 'Queen Bee' label suggests, but rather as a quest for invisibility (Lewis, 2006) as they seek *incorporation* into the valorised world of men. Therefore, by refusing to accept difference between male and female managers and by understanding their experiences as the ability to abide by 'universal' (male) standards of management, women who seek strategic invisibility by striving to be incorporated into the norm on the same

basis as men, establish a distance from any practices and values (particularly those associated with femininity) which might exclude or marginalise them.

In summary, while invisibility *within* the norm is symbolic of power and privilege, outside the norm it can signify forms of 'cultural marginalisation and symbolic negation (Tyler and Cohen, 2010: 35). Thus, through acts of withdrawal and self exclusion, women can seek to disappear and to evade the effects of alterity in the form of perceived disadvantage. Keeping a low profile (withdrawal) is however to 'invisibilise' one's merit and potential while erasure (through role traps; through the tokenism eclipse) can similarly be imposed. Finally disappearance can be a strategic choice as women seek incorporation into the norm, where it is hoped that by acting like men their gender and marked femininity will disappear.

Developments in the (In)visibility Vortex

These dynamics paint a complicated picture of how different forms of visibility and invisibility are lived, experienced and managed and of the implications which result. These dynamics are captured in a revised and refined conceptualisation, presented in Figure 2. Based on the original framework and drawing directly from its re-reading of Kanter's work, it seeks to make sense of this multifarious terrain.

INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

In so doing, the revised Vortex as outlined above does three things. Firstly, from its poststructuralist understanding of the concept of power, the Vortex demonstrates how those at the centre, in Kanter's terms the 'dominants', preserve and conceal their privileged position. This is achieved through essentialist discourses of difference that

supported understandings of women as incomprehensible, non-rational and unpredictable – and which justify their location outside the circle of power. By mobilising narratives of difference and non-suitability, the power and privileges of the centre are preserved - concealed beneath meanings and rhetoric of entitlement. However as would be expected within a poststructuralist interpretation, this situation cannot be interpreted as inherently stable. The Vortex also gives weight to the turbulence around the norm as the margins seek to infiltrate and contest its domain and as the norm resists these material and discursive incursions. As we have seen from the re-reading of Kanter's work, in preserving and concealing its privilege and advantage the norm must, through resistance and opposition, seek to protect itself from challenge.

Secondly, from the perspective of the margins, the revised Vortex as exemplified in Kanter's work provides a more nuanced account of challenges to the norm. Thus, Revelation can be *overt* through direct challenges to the practices and values of the centre. Equally, through simple presence and the potential to highlight alternatives, women can *subvert* these norms. Similarly, Exposure can be differentially experienced and managed: it can be *abject* and detrimental, *flaunted* as pleasurable display or can be used *strategically* to effect change. Finally, Disappearance can take several forms: as *withdrawal* as women choose low profile spaces and roles; as *erasure* if invisibility is imposed and as *incorporation* as some women seek to enter the (invisible) norm.

Thirdly, the revised Vortex foregrounds some of the complexities of the (in)visibility terrain. In this respect, the processes outlined above may not be sequential, may be

differentially experienced and are by no means discrete. Women can simultaneously experience or move between visibility and invisibility. They can be both over-exposed and erased (Tyler and Cohen, 2010) in that, from Kanter's account, if they perform femininity and their gender is exposed, their worth as managers disappears. Through the 'tokenism eclipse' auxiliary and defining features (dress and physical appearance) blot out technical or managerial expertise. Assigned to constraining 'role traps', they are visible as a category but their individuality disappears. While often 'in the spotlight' as "the most visible and dramatized of performers", they are simultaneously removed from the site and dynamics of influence and "kept away from the organizational back-stage where the dramas are cast" (Kanter, 1977: 239).

In this respect, the Vortex and its underlying processes and conceptualisation help to 'map' and make sense of some of the obscurities and often contradictory tendencies that are implicated in organizational experiences of advantage and disadvantage. Our re-reading of Kanter can be seen to have given empirical weight to some of the processes identified in the Vortex. Further, through this application, new theoretical insights, based on the original frame, have emerged.

Conclusion

We have argued in this article that, whilst extensively cited, Kanter's work may have been underestimated in terms of its contribution to the gender and organization studies terrain. Kanter approached her study from a liberal feminist perspective that foregrounds disadvantage in gender neutral opportunity structures and job characteristics – retreating from issues of gendered power. However by undertaking a poststructuralist re-evaluation of her work, considered through the (In)visibility Vortex and struggles over normativity, we show how visibility and invisibility can be

surfaced in her account of everyday behaviours and practices and associated with the maintenance and preservation of gendered power. These processes and dynamics have significance in contemporary contexts and can give insight into present day concerns.

Following this, our paper makes the following contributions. Firstly, our theoretical orientation and re-reading of Kanter's work help us to query the persuasiveness of current 'number based' solutions to gender inequalities that predict positive outcomes from having more women particularly at senior levels. Existing research suggests that greater numerical balance does not always lessen the tensions faced by tokens or their experiences of exclusion. Rather they may encounter less co-operation and more discrimination, hostility and competition (Paxton et al, 2007; Rosenthal, 1998). Read through the Vortex, these behaviours and practices can be explained in terms of the insecurity of the 'dominant centre' and how its incumbents seek to preserve advantage and privilege through defensive action as well as the mobilization of beliefs regarding who should rightfully occupy positions of power. Relatedly, our analysis suggests that increasing numerical balance can reinforce rather than destabilise the normative power of men as women 'take up' masculine practices and values. Here, despite increases in the number of women managers, the reliance on a small number of elite female candidates at senior levels has led to the critique that such women have benefitted disproportionately at the expense of their female colleagues. As Mavin (2008) argues regarding the moniker 'Queen Bees', such criticisms distract attention from the gendered processes inherent in most organizations. Our framework draws attention to some of these processes and offers an explanation for these women's supposed lack of 'female friendliness': their uncertain positioning within a masculine

domain may mean they seek 'strategic invisibility' that helps erase damaging markers of (embodied) femininity. They therefore adopt masculinity and distance themselves from other women. Taken together, and viewed through the lens of the Vortex, it is possible to see why a focus on numbers alone might fail- opening up further inquiry into the nature of gendered practices in and around the norm.

Secondly, our poststructuralist re-reading of Kanter's work can help identify contemporary forms of gender disadvantage and uncover hidden forms of gendered power. These have contributed to the persistence, even intensification of high levels of sex segregation both within and between occupations (Charles, 2011). For example Lyng (2010) demonstrates how normative, high commitment careers in professions such as Law, characterised as having a masculine gender, exclude women and how discourses of meritocracy and individual choice help conceal the gendered nature of its dynamics (Lyng, 2010); Harwood (2010) exposes the 'hidden' attitudes and practices in the police that support a masculine culture; while Watts (2010) explores, within the highly masculinised occupation of engineering, the ways in which 'token' women can be undermined – both conspicuous as 'physical spectacle' and invisible in relation to the authority required for the job. Read through the frame of the (In)visibility Vortex, these accounts can expose the mechanics of segregation in terms of the durability, insecurity and invisibility of the norm, how it preserves and conceals gendered processes through normalising discursive practices such as those around the notion of 'natural' difference, as well as the ways in which visibility and invisibility are implicated in day-to-day interactions, experiences and strategies of the margins. The (In)visibility Vortex accordingly helps give a theoretical foundation for understanding these dynamics and, potentially, a way of surfacing more hidden forms.

Thirdly, and following from the above, the (In)visibility Vortex offers a 'way through' current conceptualisations, influenced by post-feminist discourses of increased opportunities, choices and freedoms, that gender disadvantage has been largely 'solved' (Lewis and Simpson, 2010b). In this respect, there is a tendency among men and women to deny (or accept) gender based disadvantage at work (Lewis, 2006; Lewis and Simpson, 2010b) - even though women are still a minority at senior levels. Explanations for these and other gender based disparities often draw on the persuasiveness of meritocratic discourses and the rhetoric of individual choice (Lewis and Simpson, 2010b) as well as underlying assumptions regarding 'natural' gender difference that supports the status quo. With their reliance on the primacy of personal decisions and on so-called objective criteria of reward allocation, these discourses can serve to justify unequal outcomes and so further conceal practices of gendered power (Anderson et al, 2010; Broadbridge, 2010; Kumra, 2010; Sealy, 2010).

From a post-structuralist perspective captured in the (In)visibility Vortex we can accordingly begin to recognise a battle for priority and for normative status that may be waging at the discursive level and which can conceal on-going privilege. This occurs through the widespread acceptance and reproduction of the view that 'women's problems' in organizations have been solved or that variations in organizational position are due to 'natural' difference based on a separate-but-equal ideology. The latter contributes to a gender culture (Campbell and McCammon, 2005) which acts to limit women's entry into organizational spaces historically dominated by men. In this respect, 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.

Finally, and following the above, our framework can help examine and understand the halting nature of gender change. In this respect, there has arguably been a 'stalling' of progress, particularly at the senior levels of organizations (England, 2010). Our analysis offers some explanation for this uncertain route to gender equality by highlighting the ongoing struggles around the norm, the turbulent nature of gendered power and how the imposition and reproduction of inequality can, as discussed above, take new and sometimes insidious forms. As Swan (2005) points out, dominant norms of gender are inherently unstable and always open to re-interpretation. Through its focus on the dynamics of resistance, counter-resistance and challenge, the Vortex can throw light on the often faltering nature of gender progress and on the uneven nature of gendered change.

Future Research

From the above, we identify the following key areas of future research. In terms of numbers, work can usefully consider how the entry of women into the 'dominant centre' alters social relationships inside and outside of the norm. For example, how are processes of erasure and/or exposure experienced in different organizational contexts? How do women manage the 'marking' of their bodies as gendered and Other and how is masculine normative 'disembodiment' practised and conveyed? A further strand may include how men maintain power in different organizational contexts in invisible ways as well as how these power dynamics are resisted and 'revealed'. For example, what attitudes and values around entitlement circulate within

the norm and to what extent are they more widely shared? What recognition is afforded to organizational and structural constraints and how are organizational and wider discourses drawn upon to legitimise (and so conceal) experiences of advantage and disadvantage?

On a more specific level, and as exemplar, the Vortex can help open up the 'black box of the boardroom' which according to Tjerjesen et al (2009) has eluded most researchers and which, in terms of low proportion of women, is a current focus of concern for both individual countries and supra national bodies such as the European Union. While an attempt has been made to understand the impact of women's minority status on organizational outcomes such as profit levels, this has often overlooked intervening processes associated with categorical difference including gender. The Vortex enables a focus on these processes in the form of day-to- day interactions, behaviours and practices that signify ongoing struggles around the norm.

Thus, research can consider the implications of women's entry into the 'dominant centre' of the board room for the reproduction of boundaries between the centre and the margins e.g. through the construction of gender based 'board-room' identities as well as the ways in which women's presence may alter interactional processes such as frequency of communication or intensity of conflicts. Research can explore the different ways that women experience the processes of erasure (e.g. of being silenced, interrupted or not heard) and how gendered practices may cause women's merit and authority to be 'disappeared'. Other areas include the different ways in which female board members may reveal gendered privilege and assumptions of entitlement as well as how exposure is experienced - as abject and constraining, as trailblazing and/or as

seductive ontology and pleasurable display. In terms of the latter, does pleasure derive from being part of a small but elite group as women secure access to corporate boards – referred to as the 'Golden Skirts' in the Norwegian context - and what are the implications for how female board members encounter and relate to each other? Further, how do women accommodate or resist the 'normalising gaze' of both women and men in their embodied performances and in what ways do men seek disembodiment and a normative a-gendered status? How is gendered privilege concealed through perceptions of difference and inequality (given the low proportions of women in these senior roles) and how are these discursively accepted, justified and explained? Overall, future research can usefully explore in different organizational contexts the diverse and often hidden ways in which male privilege may be protected and denied and how, through strategies and counter-strategies involving concealing, exposure and erasure, gendered power can be both preserved and revealed.

We started this paper with the desire to draw out the gendered complexities of organisational life with a discussion of the diverse ways in which visibility and invisibility have been implicated in organizational experience and some of the contradictory processes involved. Our endeavour is therefore set in the context of a complicated terrain. The concepts of visibility and invisibility as played out in the gender dynamics of organizations are at best slippery and insecure. However, it is through these disjunctures and these gaps in understanding, through these contradictions and tensions that new research areas can be framed. Through this deconstruction of Kanter's work and the more nuanced understanding that has emerged, we seek to 'open up' complexity (Currie, 1998) and to problematise previous accounts. As Kilduff and Keleman (2004) argue, there are benefits from

revisiting classic texts in order to both recover and challenge discourses of theory and practice. Similarly, from Thomas (2003), whilst text can be seen to be reflective of a specific time and place, insights can be drawn from 'reflexive commentary' that surfaces hidden interpretations and voices. We have accordingly, through a poststructuralist re-reading of Kanter's *Men and Women of the Corporation,* challenged her interpretations based on the liberal feminist perception of gender neutral organizational structures. In contrast through the poststructuralist Vortex we have surfaced some of the implicitly drawn links between revealing and concealing and between visibility, invisibility and gendered power.

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