

Doing gender in the ‘new office’

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Abstract

Our paper investigates how gender is performed in the context of an office setting designed to promote intensive, fluid networking. We draw on an ethnographically-oriented study of the move of staff into a new office building constructed primarily from glass, and incorporating open plan offices, diverse collective areas and walking routes. Although the designers aimed to invoke changes in the behaviour of all staff, they conceptualized these changes in masculine terms. We therefore analyse the gender norms materialized by the workspaces of the ‘new office’ and how women responded to these. We suggest that the new office encourages an image of the ideal worker which brings together ways of acting and interacting that have been characterised as both masculine and feminine – active movement and spontaneous encounters, but also intensive face-to-face interaction and deep relationship-building. Women are driven into this mode of working in an uncompromising, almost aggressive way, but a straightforward gender-based dynamic does not emerge in their responses, with conventional gender characteristics being reshuffled and recombined.

Keywords: gender, women, new offices, spatial relationships, organizational space

Introduction

There is a rich body of literature exploring the ways in which gender is socially constructed by and within organizations. Studies in this literature proceed from the assumption that women and men are not pre-given, natural categories, but rather that gender is ‘done’. Nentwich and Kelan’s (2014) review of studies of ‘doing gender’ distinguishes two overlapping research positions. The ethnomethodological approach originally proposed by West and Zimmerman (1987, 2009) suggests that gender is achieved in interaction, and involves ‘being *accountable* to current cultural conceptions of conduct becoming to – or compatible with the “essential natures” of – a woman or a man’ (2009, p.14; emphasis original). The poststructuralist understanding subsequently developed by Butler (1990, 2004) stresses the notion of performativity, summarised by Nentwich and Kelan (2014) as ‘the process through which gendered subjects are constituted by regulatory norms that are

restrictive and heterosexual' (p.123). Summarising the conclusions from both approaches, Nentwich and Kelan (2014) state that gender is 'done' in response to specific situations, and its performative character means that it is unstable, and can be resisted, subverted or ignored. Because being a man or a woman 'should be seen as the outcome of a process rather than the starting point' (p.124), the difficult challenge for empirical studies is the need to investigate the actual practices of constructing or performing gender, and the ways in which these can be consciously chosen or disrupted.

Our interest focuses specifically on these practices as constituted by the body within space. There is so far relatively little research on this nexus of organizational space and the gendered body (Tyler and Cohen, 2010; Wasserman and Frenkel, 2015). According to Butler, the body 'matters' because it is a 'site of doing and being done to' (Hancock and Tyler, 2007, p.520) as it becomes implicated in social processes, inscribed by norms, and evaluated. These embodied social processes are also spatially contingent. For example, gender is done differently by nurses based in a 'large and fast' regional hospital from those in a district hospital which was 'small and slow' (Halford and Leonard, 2006), and by female farmers as they move between the different spaces of a livestock auction (Pilgeram, 2007). In their study of women working in diverse roles in a university setting, Tyler and Cohen (2010) argue that workspaces are 'a materialization of the cultural norms according to which particular gender performances are enacted' (p.193) and that the construction of a gendered identity involves spatial responses to these norms. They show that women's and men's gender performances differ: women's accounts were characterized by spatial constraint (being fixed in place and having to remain accessible), 'spillage', i.e. encroachment of their space by male colleagues, and 'bounded appropriation' of space in ways largely consistent with the gender norms of the organization and society more generally. Tyler and Cohen (2010) conclude that, 'in order to be perceived as feminine, women have to occupy space in a more tentative way than men' (p.181). Wasserman and Frenkel's (2015) study of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs shows that all the occupants of the hierarchically-configured workspace experienced it as masculine, and that women reported their consciousness of the risk of being seen as 'too feminine'. As Tyler and Cohen (2010) recognize, '*workspaces matter* to the myriad ways in which we continue to perform, practise and negotiate gender at work' (p.195, emphasis original). They call for more work exploring gender materialization within a broader range of organizational settings.

Our analysis draws on a longitudinal ethnographic study of a UK local authority (Westshire County Council, or WCC¹) in which approximately 1,000 senior staff moved from six separate departmental buildings into a shared ‘new office’ building (Duffy 1997). The design of the office building, making extensive use of glass as a construction material and incorporating large open plan offices and collective spaces, was aimed explicitly at eroding hierarchical and departmental boundaries and promoting fluid, informal networking. In Dale and Burrell’s (2008) terms, it was designed to enchant rather than control overtly, and to encourage movement rather than fixity. What is distinctive about our study is that it analyses how gender, body and space act on each other in an organizational context where people *have* to create, recreate, challenge and/or redraw boundaries. During the three years of the study, the building was purchased, employees moved into the new work environment, and work routines were re-established, modified, or created anew. Thus, the move into the strategic centre can be seen as a kind of laboratory for the study, in that it is bounded in time (rather than on-going observation of business as usual); and immersion in the new physical environment led to the establishment of new spatial norms, as members engaged in intensive interaction and exposure, provoking self-conscious reflection on theirs and others’ roles and relationships. This opportunity also enabled us to observe and interpret the significance of gender within such boundary-defining activities, and the specific conceptualizations of gender that were reconstructed or changed.

We bring together two theoretical perspectives to analyse the gendered norms that were materialized in the workspace, and the various ways in which women maintained, resisted and changed these norms. First, we draw on West and Zimmerman’s (1987) conceptualization of gender as something that is ‘done’, rather than ascribed. It is clear that if doing gender is ‘at once institutional and interactional’ (p.114), such cultural conceptions are mutable. Second, we consider Lefebvre’s (1991) conceptualization of the production of space. Although Lefebvre’s work does not engage explicitly with the relationship between social space and the construction of gendered bodies (Blum and Nast, 1996; Simonsen, 2005), as Blum and Nast (1996) show, gender is an implicit but recurrent theme throughout his theoretical framework. Consequently, they argue that, for Lefebvre, gender construction is ‘*the* fundamental social process through which alterity is achieved’ (p.559; emphasis

¹ All names are pseudonyms.

original). In the study that follows, we draw specifically on his distinction between conceived space (the intended changes of behaviour to be facilitated by the new design) and spatial practices (the actual responses made by women working in the new building) through which the collective norms become more available for co-option and/or contestation.

We have chosen to focus our analysis on women for two reasons. First, as Hassard *et al.* (2000) argue, the male body becomes invisible in organizations and female bodies stand out as different and problematic; simultaneously, the male norm can be contested. Lewis (2008) also shows that the male is the norm against which women have to be evaluated. In this case (as we will show in our findings) when the male designers spoke of the behaviours they wanted the new building to change, they framed these using masculine metaphors, although both men and women were relocated to the new office. Second, there was a lack of evidence that men had responded in ways comparable to women (for instance, none commented on whether and how they had changed their style of dress, in contrast with women participants). Our argument is that although workspaces are presented as neutral, they are material expressions of cultural conceptions of the 'ideal' worker, including how the worker 'does' gender. Therefore, we pose two research questions: what are the *particular* gender norms materialized by the workspaces of the 'new office'; and what types of spatial and embodied responses do women make?

Our paper is structured as follows. We begin with a more in-depth consideration of the construction of gender at work, before discussing how this literature intersects with Lefebvre's theorization of space. We then describe the design of the research study before presenting our findings. We uncover the changing expectations of gender performance held by the design team, and follow with an analysis of the ways in which women responded to these expectations. We conclude with a discussion of the ways in which gender characteristics are reshuffled and recombined in these new workspaces.

'Doing' gender at work

The influential essay by West and Zimmerman (1987) established the ground for interest in gender as something that is 'done' rather than ascribed. West and Zimmerman conceptualize 'doing' gender as a process, involving the identification of 'current cultural conceptions of conduct' (p.114) at play within the workplace and the reciprocal dynamics of simultaneously responding to, and contributing to these conceptualizations. Concomitantly, 'undoing' gender

implies ‘a change in the normative conceptions to which members of particular sex categories are held accountable’ (West and Zimmerman, 2009, p.117). Such changes have to be granted by members of the collective as well as being taken up by the members of the category whose norm-orientation has changed. If this acceptance is not granted, or the changes not acknowledged, then the ‘undoing’ of gender is not accomplished and the prevailing normative conceptions can reassert themselves. As such, gender is one of many forms of difference, such as race, class or status, that may be accomplished simultaneously in interaction (West and Fenstermaker, 1995).

As we are concerned with inequality and oppression, the extent to which such culturally contingent norms can be influenced and even overturned seems to be the crux of the matter. Furthermore, would such challenging of traditional norms lead to greater homogenization and the absence of gender distinctiveness or to a re-interpretation of the content of gender norms (with the possibility that these new formulations will also be imbricated with power dynamics)? Risman (2009) suggests that ‘a criterion for identifying undoing gender might be when the essentialism of binary distinctions between people based on category is challenged’ (p.83), implying that it is not the content of those distinctions but their very existence that constitutes doing gender.

More recent theorizing sees femininity in the workplace as ‘reconfigured’, incorporating both conventional masculine and feminine aspirations and behaviours. Lewis (2014) suggests that new conceptualizations of management are emerging in which feminized behaviours and forms of relationship-building are valorised with ‘the new ideal manager characterized by a feminine ethos manifest in a range of managerial attributes associated with femininity’ (p.1846). Hence there is a greater range of ‘available bodily and relational performances’ (p.1853) in ‘doing’ both gender and management; ‘women *and* men can successfully mobilize femininity when doing management and business’ (p.1847; emphasis original). However, she argues that men are still more likely to reap economic advantage from more feminized behaviours while women’s performances are ‘unrecognized and naturalized’ (p.1848). Lewis identifies a further underlying hierarchy in which not all forms of femininity are equally valued, with white, middle class and heteronormative modes being privileged. Nentwich and Kelan (2014) similarly argue that ‘doing gender means doing hierarchies and eventually leads to inequality’ (p.127). However, they conclude that the simultaneous doing of gender and hierarchy requires further empirical investigation. This is because, as West and

Fenstermaker (1995) stress, 'doing difference' is an on-going interactional accomplishment, where accountability to gender and other norms is judged according to specific social circumstances.

Many studies of 'doing' gender have taken up West and Zimmerman's (2009) suggestion that 'the practices, props, bodily postures, and movements that go into producing a display of sex category incumbency' (p.118) merit close attention. These studies have found that the ways in which working women manage, maintain and present their bodies are not innocuous considerations but have material consequences for their careers (Singh *et al.*, 2002; Brewis and Sinclair, 2000; Trethewey, 1999; Wolf, 1990). Trethewey (1999) shows how women at work have to discipline their bodies and prevent their tendency to overflow via menstruation, pregnancy and unruly clothing. During pregnancy and early motherhood, the gap between social norms of good motherhood and organizational bodily norms is particularly wide (Gatrell, 2013). Gatrell's (2013) study of working women managing their maternal bodies highlights the possibility of 'leakage' of emotions and body fluids deemed organizationally inappropriate, and the risk of shame and 'abjection' - the attribution of lower intellect to the women as she is subsumed by her body (Irigaray, cited in Gatrell, 2013). Some women managed their situation using 'stoicism' – concealing leakage or ill health, but others were able to confront and challenge organizational norms.

As we now examine, embodied performances of gender are made in relation to particular spaces. We theorize the relationship between space and the embodied performance of gender by bringing together West and Zimmerman's understanding of 'doing gender' with Lefebvre's (1991) conceptualization of the social construction of space, which we consider next.

The spatial construction of gender norms

Lefebvre's influential book, *The Production of Space* (1991), established the idea that space is simultaneously material and social, both produced through embodied social relations, and producing them. As well as analysing the processes by which space is constructed, Lefebvre provides a broad chronology of Western space, which he claims has been fashioned through a series of spatial transformations, each reflecting the specific power relations in play. His work has become prominent in organization studies (e.g. Dale and Burrell, 2008; Taylor and Spicer, 2007). Our focus in this article is on both the embodied process that Lefebvre

describes, and on the persistent but implicit genderedness of his account, as Blum and Nast's (1996) critique identifies.

Lefebvre proposes (p.39) that space is produced through the interaction of three analytic dimensions: the material environment itself, designed and built to achieve particular social outcomes (which he terms 'conceived spaces'); the everyday routines of embodied action that emerge through them ('spatial practices'); and the meanings and interpretations that inhabitants attribute to them ('lived' spaces). For Lefebvre, conceived spaces (such as offices) are materializations of the force of capitalism, and are the dominant dimension. They fulfill a dual role, being simultaneously material constructions, and also are 'conceived of not just as structures but as projects embedded in a spatial context which set up enduring sets of relations' (p.42).

According to Lefebvre, each conceived space instigates particular spatial practices, the everyday and often taken-for-granted routines of inhabiting space – such as the routes we take through a building, where and how we sit, the selection and arrangement of artefacts on a desk, and our dress, gestures and manners. Lived space refers to how spaces are construed, interpreted and imagined by people occupying and using them. The body occupies a central role in the construction of space, because 'bodies with their opacity and solidity, their warmth, their life and their death' (p.7) mediate between these three analytic dimensions. The body responds to the materiality of space and the cultural norms it represents, and it is also 'generative', possessing agency of its own arising from its 'spatial qualities (symmetries, asymmetries) and energetic properties (discharges, economics, waste)' (p.61). Embodied spatial practices are experienced directly before they are conceptualized as interpretations or 'lived' spaces. The idea that the body is a source of knowledge is developed by Harquail and King (2010), who show that 'embodied cognition' is derived from sensory engagement with the workplace. The embodied practices and understandings that construct space are also 'definitions of selfhood internalized within the body' (Simonsen, 2005, p.5). Lefebvre (1991) thus sees personhood as the emergent outcome of a dialectic between the dominant spatial norms and practices within a society, and the generative body which participates in and produces it. Both lived space and spatial practices can be sources of resistance and creativity.

However, Lefebvre also attributes gendered characteristics to the spatial configurations he discusses. For instance, industrial capitalism is facilitated by and grounded in ‘abstract space’ (1991, pp. 285-287) – the workspaces, transport routes, and spaces for consumption and living that we now take for granted – and Lefebvre identifies a masculine, phallic ‘formant’ that powerfully shapes them. This phallic dimension refers to the power and intentionality of professional space designers, such as architects and managers, who recognise that space has agency and deploy their knowhow in pursuit of specific social outcomes. Consequently, conceived spaces are frequently geometrically configured and highly visual, so that individuals can be located and their position plotted. For Lefebvre, the phallic formant is masculine: as he writes, ‘Metaphorically, [abstract space] symbolizes force, male fertility, masculine violence’ (p.287). Leonard (2002) characterizes the phallic dimension as the capacity to design spaces in ways that flatten out religion, fantasy and the body to create ‘public, hierarchical and ‘mappable’ space, which men naturally occupy’ (p.63). It is through the intentionality behind these designs that control is attempted and individuals are scripted into place (Blum and Nast, 1996). However, Lefebvre notes that such attempts at control are not always overt; rather, successful capitalist relations are reliant on people moving through and appropriating space, so that they become consumers of the space itself. According to Blum and Nast (1996), this variation of abstract space, which we can see exemplified in new offices designed to ‘enchant’ their occupants as they roam through, complicates the gender relations at play. As ‘consumers’ of these spaces, people ‘increasingly think about what utopic place *they* will penetrate and inhabit for the sake of pleasure’ (p.574; emphasis original).

Blum and Nast (1996) seek to extend the liberatory potential that Lefebvre offers by questioning the gendered metaphors that pervade his writing – such as the ‘phallic’ dimension of contemporary conceived spaces. As Blum and Nast (1996) state, Lefebvre persistently equates the masculine with ‘activity, movement, agency, force, history’, while the feminine is ‘passive, immobile, subject to force and history’ (p.577), and fails to recognize that this understanding is itself socially constructed. The active-passive binary, they argue, is most problematic, because it has rendered women’s sociospatial agency invisible. We can see the social effects of this pervasive assumption in, for example, Tyler and Cohen’s (2010) finding that women’s occupation of space is ‘more tentative’ (p.181) than men’s.

Bringing together Lefebvre (1991), Blum and Nast (1996), and West and Zimmerman (2009) enables us to conceptualize doing and undoing gender as spatial and embodied processes. Doing and undoing are brought about through the ‘practices, props, bodily postures, and movements’ (West and Zimmerman 2009, p.118) that we all use to express a gendered identity, in relation to the dominant spatial norms of a particular place. The spatial practices people adopt may variously observe and reproduce the kinds of spatial practice regarded as appropriate, or they may challenge them. We need to be alert to the possibility that ‘the more mutable and ‘feminized’ socio-spatial practices and struggles’ (Blum and Nast 1996, p.577) may be less easy to recognize, and seek out more subtle challenges to dominant norms. But, as West and Zimmerman (2009) remind us, such ‘undoing’ can only take place if modified practices are collectively accepted and embedded as new norms.

Our investigation of these processes takes place in a building that is part of the widespread trend towards ‘new offices’, specifically a ‘club’ office design intended to promote information sharing and creativity (Duffy, 1997). These designs incorporate open plan office areas, liminal spaces without clearly defined purposes, and choices of walking routes, all aiming to encourage movement and flow, and enable interaction between occupants irrespective of formal level or specialism. Desks, computers and other essential artifacts are standardized rather than reflecting status through size or quality. The sensual experiences of occupants are carefully designed, using light, artwork and colour, in order to “capture hearts and minds’: ... to encourage individuals to *identify* themselves with the organisation’ (Dale and Burrell, 2008, p.99; emphasis original). New offices often incorporate features that have traditionally belonged to non-work social domains (Dale and Burrell, 2008), such as kitchen facilities and informal areas for relaxation, eating and drinking, or play. In Blum and Nast’s (1996) terms, new offices can be thought of as spaces for consumption as well as production. In the light of the complexity of these workspaces, we need to examine the particular gender norms they channel and communicate, and the spatial and embodied responses they might provoke.

Research design

Empirical setting

Our analysis draws on a wider longitudinal, inductive and exploratory case study of the spatial reconfiguration of WCC. This reconfiguration began with the acquisition of Enterprise House, a new office building designed to provide a ‘strategic centre’ by housing elected

Councillors, senior managers and supporting staff. About 1,100 staff moved into Enterprise House from the ‘old campus’ – a collection of six buildings of different ages, each accommodating a single directorate. Enterprise House exemplified the trends in office design discussed above. It reflected Duffy’s (1997) design logic for a ‘club’ type office, aiming to support knowledge work performed by autonomous networkers requiring high degrees of interaction.

To support these new working practices, the new building was constructed predominantly from reinforced glass and was almost entirely transparent. The visibility of the workspace meant that merely by being present, employees were participating in interaction. Apart from discreet ‘ladies’ and ‘gents’ signs labeling the toilets, material and symbolic indications of difference were absent. All office space was open plan, the desks and other artefacts that employees used were identical, and large areas were left available for collective activity, mostly undefined. Thus, the new design entailed physical proximity, allowed movement and opportunities for spontaneous interaction, and implied a lack of differentiation between roles – although differentiation might happen in the context of particular projects, structures could dissolve and re-form easily.

Fieldwork

Research access to Enterprise House was granted by the Chief Executive shortly after it was first occupied. The first author (Alison) had sole responsibility for data collection, which included participant-observation, semi-structured interviews, and reviewing a wide range of official and unofficial documents. Fieldwork was conducted throughout a three-year period, with two phases of intensive participant-observation and interviewing, and further fieldwork visits between them. Participant-observation in Enterprise House involved attending formal and informal meetings, administrative work relating to the research project, and lunch and coffee breaks with organizational members. This direct involvement enabled Alison to observe the spatial practices members used (e.g. ways of dressing, walking and interacting) and to perform them in broadly similar ways. In doing so, she could construct aspects of the embodied knowledge (Harquail and King, 2010) that occupants similarly derived from their sensory engagement with the workspace. As Gregson and Rose (2000) recognize, participant-observation entails not only ‘interpreting discursive accounts ... but observing and interpreting the visual, aural, olfactory space ... and participating in its production’ (p.435).

Alison conducted 46 semi-structured interviews, ranging from 55 minutes to 2 hours, with 40 employees (27 women and 13 men). The interview schedule was semi-open ended, and, in the spirit of ethnographic interviewing, allowed interviewees to shape the questions being asked and develop the focus of the research (Heyl, 2001). Interviews were recorded and professionally transcribed, and the length of transcripts ranged from 7,500 to 12,000 words. Key informants in phase 1 were all men. They were the Chief Executive (James), Marcus, the Director of the Project Board (the team of eight senior staff specially created to finalize the building design and orchestrate staff moves), the lead Architect (Rory) and the Project Consultant (Simon). We classified members of this group as ‘organization designers’, concerned with the simultaneous redesign of the physical environment and the social life of the organization. Interviewees in the second phase of fieldwork included both men and women, and occupied a much wider range of roles and statuses, ranging from Directors of Service to temporary project workers. Questions were open-ended and focused on: informants’ job roles, their work priorities and key relationships, including with material objects; and how their work processes were enabled or constrained by the new building.

Initially, Alison did not regard gender as an important analytic category. WCC espoused explicit equality goals, both in relation to the public services it provided and to the composition and treatment of its workforce. Although occupational and hierarchical gender segregation was evident, women were represented at senior levels. The organization thus appeared to be one in which gender inequality was progressively being ‘solved’. However, it was notable that all the organization designers were men, and that women outnumbered men by 2:1 in informants who volunteered to participate in phase 2. Then, as the fieldwork proceeded, Alison also noticed that the building seemed to make a difference to how she and others were performing gender. She was, for example, surprised by the unusual amount of care she took over her own appearance, a degree of self-consciousness that she found burdensome as time progressed. To ‘fit in’ with the modern, clean aesthetic of the building itself and a dress code that was widely adopted, she departed from her usual preference for wearing jeans and no make-up; adopting a smart trouser suit and putting on make-up. This seemed necessary, she reasoned, to establish credibility with the senior organization members present in the workspace. It would also enable her to ‘disappear’, by complying with what she construed as a ‘normal’ form of self-presentation; a professional, and understated but clearly heterosexual, identity. Alison felt that she looked unremarkable and drew no attention to herself, but also that she could stand up to close inspection if necessary. Consequently, she

wondered whether others were also revising their gendered performances in response to the new environment. Because of the gradual realization of the significance of gender in the new building, questions about gender did not feature in the interview schedules in phase 1 of the fieldwork (but where informants raised gender-related issues, the conversation followed). However, in the second phase of fieldwork, interview questions about how gender mattered in the new workspace were included, where interviewees seemed to feel at ease with this.

Analysis

Our analysis focuses on three areas: the ways in which the norms of the newly desired behaviours were identified, communicated and understood; how these new behaviours were experienced; and how they were resisted. We began by reviewing the field notes, interview transcripts and other documentary materials, including a comprehensive search for all references to gender. From this we identified observations indicating the possible significance of gender in the design of the workspace and in women's efforts to claim membership there. We coded informants' accounts based on when and where gendered norms surfaced as an issue to be managed, the responses called for and the strategies women devised to deal with them. Following West and Zimmerman (2009) we inferred what cultural conceptions of gender were salient and the extent to which they were accepted, ignored or resisted.

As far as possible, we adopted a grounded theory approach, basing our analysis on informants' emic constructions of gender, rather than imputing our own theories to them (Charmaz and Mitchell, 2001). However, when analysing the interviews with the organization designers, we attributed meanings to the masculine metaphors they used of which they may have been less conscious. As such we are drawing on the use of metaphor in organizational research as heuristic to surface 'theories-in-use' (author ref) and analyse what Schön (1979) calls 'problem setting', where metaphors frame the problem to be solved in a way that points to specific solutions. As Schön (1979, p.255) argues, the metaphor casts a spell whereby the nature of the problem seems obvious, '[b]ut this sense of obviousness depends very much on the metaphor remaining tacit'. Thus, our analysis aimed to surface the more latent meanings suggested by the use of specific metaphors by our informants. In general, working as an 'insider/outsider pair' (Lingard *et al.*, 2007) we carried out the analysis both independently and together, taking different but overlapping roles. As the insider, Alison had participated in the field and had partial access to emic constructions of

gender while Christina, the more independent outsider, was able to surface and question these constructions.

Enterprise House as conceived space: the gendered norms of the new desired behaviours

At the time of the interviews with the four organization designers, Enterprise House had recently been completed and staff had begun to move in. The project was widely spoken of as a bold and ambitious move that had proved extremely successful. The two senior managers, James and Marcus, exuded a confident, ‘bullish’ air, and their accounts of the move expressed, in Cassell’s (2005) words, an ‘image of themselves as organisational heroes’ (p.175). Marcus (Director of the Project Board), for instance, compared WCC’s successful acquisition of the building with the failure of another local authority to make a similar move, observing that ‘*we didn’t just talk about it, we get on and do it*’.

The organization designers initially described the transformation they wanted Enterprise House to achieve by contrasting it with the old campus. This contrast included the modern image of WCC these buildings projected (Hirst and Humphreys, 2013): according to Marcus, external audiences would see the buildings and infer qualities of the staff from their images:

If you were coming into dusty old Weston Court, that immediately says to you ... dusty, crusty, fallen- down, tatty, shabby. So what sort of service am I going to get from somebody here? Whereas if you go into glitzy, smart, efficient, modern, you think well these people must be pretty switched on, I’m not going to mess with these people.

James, the Chief Executive, suggested that the compartmentalized ‘old campus’ buildings encouraged staff to behave passively:

Where we were before was absolutely dreadful buildings. I found them deeply, deeply depressing, I used to hate them with a passion. I hated them because they were disconnected. Like the Tardis², people went in at half past eight in the morning, they went into a time warp and then they’d be spewed out at 5.30 at night. They would never come across anybody else other than their immediate peers [...]. So partly it was a kind of revulsion with our old

² The ‘tardis’ (Time and Relative Dimensions in Space) is the mode of transport for Dr Who, the eponymous character in a UK TV series).

buildings but also a sense that they didn't work, they didn't enable people to know each other in any kind of real, meaningful connecting way, they created a separation even within the departments because they were very much cellular offices. So it's fine if we thought that the vision for WCC was something that monks and hermits could achieve, but monks and hermits don't achieve the connections, actually they were valuing separateness, insularity ... they were valuing the quiet deliberative approach to life, and they were not valuing what I see as fundamentally the important networks.

It is striking that James expresses what is now regarded as 'incorrect' behaviour in WCC using gendered metaphors – monks and hermits are celibate men, who, whether through choice or exclusion, exist at the margins of society. The '*quiet deliberative approach*' may be diligent and pious, as are monks and hermits, but it is disconnected. We therefore suggest that in his use of these metaphors, James associates passivity, insularity, marginalization and isolation with a 'failed' (and highly undesirable) masculinity.

In stark contrast to these obsolete routines, the organization designers described the new spatial practices they wished to establish in terms of movement, interaction and visibility. In various ways, they suggested that Enterprise House could initiate and sustain these practices by acting on the body. The architect, Rory, expressed his hope that the building would be, *something that makes you just feel good to be in the space and the spirit of it. I would like to feel that people came to the building and felt they belonged to a team that was doing something, going somewhere and they were looking forward to it, put a spring in their steps as they walked into the building to start work.*

The experience of being in the building could energize the body, harness its generative capacity, and evoke feelings of togetherness and optimism. The Chief Executive also spoke enthusiastically about his new freedom to conduct work by just wandering through the building and interacting with people spontaneously, and he stressed that others were equally free to approach him. However, the new walking freedoms were also described in terms that Lefebvre would code as masculine. For instance, Simon, the Project Consultant, described the ideal worker as a mobile worker who could move through the space at will:

The mobile worker is someone who can work from various, different locations including home ... you know, he's out and about, he's moving around. Technically the infrastructure

here is capable, anybody can log on to any of the PCs in the building, work at any desk in the building [...] at any time, they just come in and plug and play.

Although the argument was that everyone can participate in these new spatial freedoms and the resultant exchanges can be reciprocal, this new behaviour can also be inferred as active and sexualised, in the sense that the space is there to be penetrated.

The organization designers also argued that the building would stimulate the development of more informal, deeper relationships. Rory suggested that relationships could become:

... informal, which means that people feel able to talk to each other, and not held back in the strictures of some formal business approach, whether it's wearing a suit and tie or acting in a way where a meeting is very formal and has to be minuted. So hopefully, that informality would be productive because people would be communicating and understand other people's desires and needs and understand the way they work together.

Using a masculine dress style to exemplify 'stricture', Rory argues that the building can release occupants from formality in dress, manner and protocol and that this can enable more authentic, intimate communication. This is a place where members can be who they 'really' are.

In the early phase of occupation, the visibility of the building was one of its most striking features. Marcus, the Director of the Project Board, stated that *'the intention was to have a more relaxed environment, a more open environment, so the designing in was all glass, so that people can see us'*. He recognized the potential for panoptic surveillance, but suggested that the condition of mutual visibility in which *'everyone's a warder'* would generate power in a productive sense. He stressed the equality and lack of differentiation involved in this form of regulation: there is constant surveillance; but it is subtle, not overt. It is also multi-directional, and consequently the environment is more relaxed.

However, Rory suggested that it might take time to generate a more relaxed environment in the highly visible workspace. He used an analogy with a 'nudist beach' to explain how the 'settling in' process might work:

People are being told that it's better. It's not necessarily better, I feel watched now, now why is that better? But I think it's like going to a nudist beach, you know, first you're a little bit

worried that everyone's looking at you but then you think, hang on, everybody else is naked, no-one's looking at each other. I think that's what'll happen, they'll get on with it.

Rory suggests that people's anxieties about being exposed will initially surface but will then subside as exposure becomes part of shared, unnoticed experience. However, Douglas and Rasmussen's (1978) ethnographic study of a nudist beach suggests that Rory's interpretation is problematic: their findings indicated that naked people do continue to look at one another, although surreptitiously, and men in particular, often in groups, look obsessively at women.

Explicit mention of gender was made only twice in the conversations with the organization designers. In his role as leader of the Project Board, Marcus led a formal consultation which invited prospective occupants to express their concerns about the new building:

I was consulted by lots of people, women who were very worried about wearing skirts in an open plan building and going upstairs. And people were going around saying things like well I can't start an affair here, what happens if you're having an affair now? [laughter] But why not? Surely, you start any relationship by, you know, talking to people, you don't suddenly grope somebody in a corner. Which I thought was interesting, I think that's what he must have thought.

In the consultation Marcus reported, the women's concerns appeared to reinforce the similarity between the office and a nudist beach, and in turn, the 'people' (a man) joked about its capacity to inhibit office romance. Each reference to gender is about sex, and both place women and men in conventional roles. But Marcus refers to women specifically in the first example, while initially using the ungendered term 'people' in the second, although it becomes clear that only one man raised this issue.

The second overt reference to gender was made in the context of an event that caused widespread ripples. When staff first moved in, one disgruntled manager bypassed the official consultation and complained publicly in the local press. An article was published listing various alleged problems with the building, including the lack of urinals in the men's toilets. The unhappy manager was reprimanded by the Chief Executive and the episode formed the basis for humorous stories which circulated throughout the organization. As one employee joked, the manager had suggested that '*there were no urinals and we'd all be standing outside like a bunch of girls*' – as if humiliated by the comparison to those '*girls*' who by

necessity are visibly proclaiming their female anatomy and bodily functions. The manager's outburst implies that hitherto taken-for-granted masculine dignity appears not to be reliable, and thus anxieties are surfaced. And indeed, in interviews and conversations, many men said that they found the absence of urinals disconcerting.

The overt suggestion in these accounts is that differences should, and will, disappear. But this is evoked using highly sexualised metaphors. We suggest that Enterprise House's design was informed by latent heterosexual norms and definitions of identity. From the beginning, sex has to be on show (on the nudist beach, the monks forced out of their cells) and the new space must be penetrated and appropriated. We now turn to the various ways in which women responded to the new space in order to claim their membership of it.

Negotiating new forms of gendered spatiality

Our data suggest that for some women, the new office appeared to have the effect that the designers spoke of, in terms of shaping a social realm composed of equals whose identities were not prejudged through their association with a particular space, and whose choices over who they could become had been extended. As Diane (Transport Planner) argued:

I like the fact that we've got open offices and you're not pigeonholed, that you can talk to everybody. You can see everybody and you just feel that you're all part of the same thing.

Elizabeth (Learning and Development Manager) observed that people were dressing more smartly, just as Marcus had suggested. For her, however, this was not an outcome forced by oppressive surveillance, but an opportunity to grow into a fulfilling new identity as both an individual and member of the collectivity:

I notice people's level of dress just went up! You know people seemed to be more - not more confident, that would be wrong - to have more respect for themselves. We've got much more acknowledgement of one another and acknowledgement of self, which we didn't have before, so that's about 'I am who I am' regardless of whether I'm on a walkway, sitting at a desk or visiting the loo or whatever.

The mutual acknowledgement of self and of one another is something that appears to be new, and that the new building has done. Also as Rory, the architect, had suggested, in this workspace it was possible to be your authentic self. The new sense of self-respect is possible, Elizabeth argues, even if your actions show your intention to 'visit the loo'. In contrast with

the reference to ‘visiting the loo’ as a source of shame, according to Elizabeth, this could now be done with pride, suggesting that even bodily functions such as urination could be acknowledged openly. Shahida, a temporary worker, pointed out that she had formally requested that vending machines selling tampons should be put in the women’s toilets (while condoms were available in the men’s toilets, in the women’s there were neither tampons nor condoms). This was not joked about publicly as had been the case for the ‘lack of urinals’ complaint, but it suggested that female bodily fluids could be discreetly talked about - and tampon vending machines were installed.

Estelle, a Care Procurement manager, appeared to flout conventional gendered norms by adopting exactly the assertive, penetrating spatial practices that the Chief Executive had endorsed. Estelle wore a short, spiky hairstyle and clean-cut, masculine attire which did not seem to express accountability to conventional heteronormative ideals. Estelle was clear in her advice about how to ‘get on’ in this sort of work and how Enterprise House assisted her: *My advice in any team, in any job, is ‘ask questions’. Your question is never silly. And challenge. The shrinking violet is no good. In a partnership you need to be able to speak up. You need to be able to say, ‘That’s not what we accept. That’s not the way we can do it’. In Enterprise House, the people you need to talk to are there, so you go and find them. Go and stand in front of them. It’s good for meeting, networking and learning.*

We note the contrast between how the first author chose to respond to the new building and Estelle’s style of dress and self-presentation, which challenged those conventions. Estelle also appeared comfortable with approaching people, whether or not they expected or wanted to interact with her. Estelle did not conform to the usual heteronormative type, and as she suggested, the building worked for her.

For gender norms to be undone, there must be both an attempt to change sex category norms, and acceptance of the changed position from members of the collective (West and Zimmerman, 2009). The women’s accounts above suggest that such new possibilities for claiming membership could, indeed, be negotiated and legitimated through recognition. We now, however, move on to consider more ambivalent accounts, in which the challenging of conventional norms was attempted or accomplished through compromise.

The reassertion of more conventional feminine spatiality

West and Zimmerman (2009) point out that if acceptance of changed forms of behaviour is not granted, then attempts to 'undo' gender cannot be accomplished and the prevailing normative conceptions reassert themselves. In Enterprise House, we observed attempts at 'undoing' in terms of adopting new practices of movement, interaction and response to visibility that were either not granted endorsement or could only be secured by means of a conscious compromise. For instance, in contrast with Estelle, Alison recounts in her field notes an attempt to challenge traditional gender norms by making a spontaneous approach to a staff member who happened to be a man. Alison was trying to locate an interviewee, Sue, whom she had arranged to meet at her desk, but who was absent when she approached. She wrote:

I approached Sue's desk at the appointed time, but found it unoccupied. What to do? There was a man sitting by the window next to Sue's empty desk, and a young woman opposite. I thought to myself, well I'm damned if I'm going to assume that she's the admin person! and I asked the man, very politely, if he knew where Sue was. He was visibly irritated by this interruption. He looked up long enough to inform me, brusquely, that she was at a meeting, and by the time I was thanking him he had already fixed his gaze back on his computer screen, where it remained.

Alison had made a conscious attempt to avoid conventional assumptions about role or status based on gender. Even if the man been a higher status employee (he was, as it turned out), in the new environment it was, in principle, possible to make a spontaneous approach even to the Chief Executive. However, this was not a successful manoeuvre. It is not possible to say exactly why the man expressed irritation, but the rebuff suggested to the researcher that she should after all have assumed that the woman was the 'admin person' and that gender and hierarchy were expected to be performed conventionally in this situation.

The visibility of the workspace meant that being observed was a constant possibility. The architect had argued that as time went on, this increased visibility would become more or less ignored, and as we suggested above, some women recounted experiences of visibility and movement as useful, pleasurable and fulfilling. For others, though, this newfound visibility was perceived as uncomfortable or oppressive. For example, Pat (Highways Officer) described how women attending job interviews had been 'marked' for their attractiveness by men in her team:

One of the things that the young guys used to do, is if there was an interview being held and there was a stream of young ladies coming through, they'd actually be marking them. And sometimes I used to think, that girl hasn't actually got out of the door yet, please!

Visibility enabled these men to judge and rank women according to their sexual attractiveness, just like men on the nudist beaches described by Douglas and Rasmussen (1978). Although visibility placed curbs on this kind of behaviour – ‘watching’ had to be done surreptitiously – the building provided a space where it was much easier for men to exercise this kind of ‘male gaze’. Conscious of this possibility, some women spoke of the anxiety they felt and the restrictions they placed on themselves to avoid being judged in this way. For example, Alison asked interviewees whether they would walk into another office area unannounced:

...you don't do it, do you. You just don't, do you? Right, this is going to sound extremely sexist but remember I do work with a lot of men. (laughs) If you were a female, that would definitely get a comment from all the men because they would notice you. (Wendy, Transport Researcher)

Many women observed that ‘*there isn't anywhere that you don't feel watched*’. Several chose to manage their visibility by adjusting the way they dressed. Women did not simply present themselves more smartly in a uniform way, however, but did so in ways that would signal their belonging to a particular status. For example, Annabel had recently moved from a senior management position in the NHS, where she worked in what she described as a ‘*poky*’ building. Her new management role in WCC involved networking as a way of ‘*joining up*’ services, and Annabel expressed enthusiasm for all the spaces in Enterprise House which facilitated networking. However, she also said that she had changed the way she presented herself, in order to signal her seniority:

In the NHS, the emphasis was on patient care and a more casual attitude to how you were dressed. And then suddenly here everybody looked quite smart and on-trend and I felt quite old-fashioned. So I spent a lot of money on clothes. And also where I used to wear a cardi at work, it's a jacket now.

A1: So what would a cardi say about you?

Well I think a cardi says admin. There's a whole subtle ranking and I think for women it's particularly significant. So, regular haircuts. Roots and shoots, very important. Make-up;

essential, but yes, you realise that really subtle is good. Before I came here I would sometimes wear jeans, but people in jeans does so not happen here you know.

Annabel's interpretation of the 'new' spatial rules was that, on the one hand, she could use the building exactly as the organization designers had intended, by appropriating it opportunistically. On the other hand, she was careful to present herself both as an attractive woman and as possessing the high status which could persuade others that it would be worthwhile cooperating with her. The researcher made a similar interpretation of the new rules. Her tacit interpretation of the 'deal' in Enterprise House was that, in order to be successful at roaming about and interacting with high status colleagues, she had to adjust her appearance and look conventionally business-like and feminine.

In subsequent interviews, Alison enquired further into the tacit rules relating status with dress and movement, and was informed that many senior women managers could be identified by their smart clothing and assertive gait. Certain women Councillors were noted for wearing eccentric, but very expensive, designer label clothing. And while women occupying lower status roles also appeared to recognise the 'subtle ranking', or rules of membership that Annabel had spoken of, they adopted a different response. Brenda (Helpdesk Officer), used her dress to downplay her status:

I like wearing suits and I like wearing jackets but where I am working now I have to tone down the way I dress. Otherwise you look like you're trying to be a bit full of yourself sometimes.

Unlike Annabel, who made full use of the building's collective spaces, Brenda was one of several women stated that they were inclined to remain within their departmental 'home' office, commenting '*I don't tend to come out into the atrium to eat because you always feel so overt if you sit there*'. And indeed, the researcher often noticed men watching women walk through the long, uninterrupted spaces of the building, sometimes appearing to struggle between their wish not to appear rude, and their wish to watch the woman.

Managing alterity

We have suggested that the ways in which women moved around the space and presented their bodies played a significant part in their attempts to negotiate and take up roles in Enterprise House. However, as Lefebvre points out, the body is generative and does not

always comply with our attempts to manage ‘it’. The visibility of the new workspace made management of some of the body’s ‘discharges’ more difficult, because they were exposed.

For instance:

If you’re upset about something, there’s nowhere to go. Where can you go? All you can do is go to the Ladies, so there’s nowhere that you can go and speak to somebody on a one-to-one basis where you can’t be observed. (Samira, Adult Care Manager)

Similarly, Jean had been ‘*on the end of a bad appraisal*’, was in tears in the glass meeting room and felt that everyone was looking at her. Although she said that she ‘*just wanted to get out*’ her manager appeared not to react or show much sympathy – perhaps also wary of being observed or of drawing attention to the appraisee’s distress. Others spoke of the difficulties they had trying to suppress the appearance of menopausal symptoms:

Because I’m a woman of the age that I am, I do have hot flushes. We can’t have fans, but just to have a small fan on my desk would be wonderful, just to be used every now and again. Even then it would be so obvious ... so I just have to sort of work through it [laughs]. (Ruth, Purchasing Adviser)

Keeping these ‘discharges’ private is rendered more difficult because the building exposes them, and attempts to mitigate them would also draw attention to the fact that they were happening. This seemed to create a situation in which everyone, including, in Jean’s account, her manager, was obliged to pretend the ‘leakages’ were not happening.

Discussion

We began our enquiry with two research questions: what are the *particular* gender norms materialized by the workspaces of the ‘new office’; and what types of spatial and embodied responses do women make? First, we conclude that the image of the ideal worker embodied and communicated by the ‘new office’ is both conventionally masculine and feminine, but is still implicitly assumed to be a man: the worker strides around unflinchingly, is well presented, is ever-ready to engage and innovate, and is capable of deep relationship-building. Second, we have demonstrated that women enacted a range of responses to these new norms of movement, interaction and exposure. Some women spoke of the new building as a liberating space which opened up a broader range of choices about who to be and how to act, and where gender appeared not to be relevant; for others the building imposed harsh constraints, as its insistence on constant visibility clashed with norms dictating how the

female body must be managed. We also observed a middle ground whereby women would consciously change their appearance or patterns of movement in line with the specific roles they aimed to take up within the new collective.

The gendered office

Along with Lefebvre (1991), Tyler and Cohen (2010), and Wasserman and Frenkel (2015), we argue that conceived spaces such as offices incorporate complex constructions of gender as part of the enduring patterns of relations they are designed to realize. The 'new office' in our study was designed to encourage modes of movement that were energetic and penetrative, but also to foster consensual and authentic relationships. The senior managers suggested that it also provided an antidote to another gendered space, the traditional, closed offices of the 'old campus' and the emasculated spatial practices that it had helped to construct.

The organization designers expressed several related and interdependent official aims. The removal of markers of status was claimed to be necessary because fluid networking could only happen if hierarchical control and surveillance were relaxed. The building could energize the bodies of its occupants and infuse them with optimism and a sense of belonging. It would encourage mobility and allow the freedom to approach any other person. Relationships could become less formal, more intimate and more authentic. The experience of constant visibility, regarded as a precondition for networking, might cause initial discomfort, but the staff would quickly become accustomed to it because they were all in the same boat, so to speak. Much as Duffy (1997, p.10) suggests, the new office is designed to press occupants into 'unremitting teamwork', create networked, boundary-crossing structures, and enable non-dominating relationships characterized by equality, reciprocity, freedom, and removal of hierarchical power, to unfold.

As we also observed, although the organization designers made few direct references to gender, all the metaphors (e.g. '*monks*') and metonyms (e.g. the constraining '*suit and tie*') used to represent the opposite to these new desired practices were masculine. These latent meanings suggest that the problem the building was designed to solve was that WCC had been held back by an unsatisfactory, obsolete kind of masculinity; Enterprise House proved instead to be an attempt to impose a new kind of super-energised hegemonic masculinity. The

building's ability to shake up old, entrenched spatial routines could also reconfigure these routines along more sexualized lines.

The fact that expressions of gender in relation to both the old campus and the new workspace were almost wholly implicit is worthy of further consideration. As Harquail and King (2010) point out, not all embodied knowledge is accessible to be articulated verbally, but resides unexpressed in our bodies. The latent expressions of the gendered-ness of the workspace and their references to other bodies, such as those of hermits, were perhaps traces of this embodied knowledge. The two senior managers involved in the design project expressed strong distaste for the old campus. Was the old campus something that they disliked so strongly because they found their association with it emasculating?

Similarly, Blum and Nast (1996) indicate that Lefebvre's understanding of the spatiality of gender bubbles just under the surface, and that he implies a dichotomy between the 'active' masculine and the 'passive' feminine. In our case the initial division was made, not between masculine and feminine, but between the 'wrong' sort of masculinity and a 'better' ideal which combined behaviours which are thought of as conventionally masculine (active, mobile, seeking out encounters) and feminine (openness, authenticity and willingness to listen). However, men were implied to represent both the old and new occupants generally. In contrast, women were mentioned explicitly as women and in connection with sexual matters – having someone look up your skirt, as someone to have an affair with, as a bunch of girls queuing outside the loo. The move to Enterprise House appeared to provoke anxieties among prospective occupants about how gender might forcibly be redefined, and it introduced the fearful possibility of abjection. Referring to her large, pregnant body, one of Gatrell's (2012) informants remarks, 'It was like *pointing* to my femaleness' (p.633). Queuing outside the loo (even when done by men) could similarly point to their leakiness and enable colleagues to dwell on it, thus risking abjection. Hassard *et al.* (2000) have highlighted how the male body is the implicit norm which makes female bodies stand out as different, although this norm too can be challenged. In our case, both of these processes appeared to be at work: female bodies remained problematic and potentially disruptive, but the detached, passive male body also had to be stirred up.

Responses to the gendered office

We now turn to the ways in which women sought out membership of the strategic collective, in a situation in which they had to manage different 'rules' of membership – one in which the building disrupted rote practices and encouraged its occupants to engage in unconstrained networking, roaming freely and 'being themselves', and other, implicit norms associated with sex category incumbency.

Some women appeared to embrace the norms of mobility, interaction and self-presentation that the building designers espoused. They spoke of new freedoms to be more fully themselves; they walked across and confronted people; they looked actively at others; they requested adaptations to the loos; and they accepted and enjoyed being visible. These new practices appear to have become endorsed and established, in the way that West and Zimmerman (2009) argue is needed for laying down a changed norm (although attempts to change norms were not guaranteed to be accepted, as the first author's experience indicates). In these responses, the informants made no reference to their status as women at all, and so, as Risman (2009) might suggest, these actions and events seem to point to the non-relevance of gender in this situation. The new office thus seems to offer the potential for new forms of action which women experience as positive, liberating and authentic and which do not accord with the 'passive' status that has been traditionally associated with being feminine.

In a second type of response, gender was highly relevant as women engaged in detailed self-scrutiny and self-management, in order to 'do' gender and hierarchy simultaneously and successfully. For example, successful accomplishment as a high status networker required dressing up (wearing a jacket rather than a 'cardi' which might cause one to be mis-identified as 'admin'), whereas taking up a lower status role was accomplished by dressing down and 'staying put' in one's own office. Through these changed practices, women were expressing accountability to particular roles and statuses, and reducing the risk of being mistaken for persons of higher or lower statuses. West and Fenstermaker (1995) similarly cite the case of a maid caring for a rich family's children: the mother/ employer insisted that the maid wore a uniform to the beach, even though it was unsuitable. But '[w]ithout a uniform, she could be mistaken for one of the guests and, hence, not be held accountable as a maid' (p.27).

These examples also illustrate the point that gendered norms are not coherent but a sort of historically assembled hodge podge - in order to behave in a more masculine way (roaming) women might judge that they must at the same time behave in a more feminine way (applying

subtle make up). Lewis (2014) notes the emergence of multiple femininities in organizations, but also observes that even when such feminized modes of behaviour are seen as desirable, a subtle hierarchical ordering is still achieved, with white, middle class and heteronormative modes being privileged. In our case, there appeared to be such an implicit ranking system in these aspects, so that senior women presented themselves and acted in a way that expressed 'look at me!' and their junior counterparts sought to achieve the opposite move and blend into the background.

A third category of responses related to situations in which the body does very awkward things - its 'discharges' (Lefebvre, 1991) or its 'tendency to overflow' (Trethewey, 1999) - that gender rules dictate must be concealed. For example, the appearance of tears or hot flushes had to be suppressed rather than managed actively, because this would draw attention to their occurrence. However, the building dictates that occupants must be revealed, because herein lies incipient networking. The gulf between the two sets of gender rules was at its widest in this situation. Tears, hot flushes and blood point directly to the fact that you have a woman's body, and must be hidden to avoid deep humiliation, as Trethewey (1999) says. But in the new office it is difficult or impossible to hide. Therefore, women had to react with 'stoicism' (Gatrell, 2013) - a form of body-work which involves 'working through' the body's overflows without complaint, in order to protect their worth to the organization and reduce the risk of marginalization. In Enterprise House, stoicism was not a choice as it was for Gatrell's (2013) informants; it was the only realistic option, because attempts to alleviate symptoms would draw attention to them.

How might gender be seen differently, as a result of this study? In answer to our research questions, we conclude that although Enterprise House was ostensibly designed to promote the realization of an idealised worker embodying both masculinized and feminized performance of gender for all staff, this was underpinned by an underlying, and gendered, hierarchy of valued and less desirable attributes and behaviours. This leads us to ask, if the 'new office' offers a model of new masculinity that incorporates aspects of behaviour and presentation traditionally thought of as feminine, as Lewis (2014) suggests and our findings support, where does that leave women? What is 'new femininity' in relation to it? We suggest that gender is constantly in contestation, as different elements are reproduced, discarded and recombined in many different ways. The physical spaces in which these actions occur are not neutral but shape them in myriad ways, both implicit and explicit. They also

influence the extent to which attempts to 'do' gender differently are accepted, resisted or marginalized.

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Like all case studies, ours has limitations, which point to the need for further research. We have identified some of the ways in which workspaces might be expressing organizational expectations about gender and the broad categories of response. These analytic generalizations will not necessarily apply to other new office settings (Yin, 2013); different processes may emerge within different empirical settings. For example, in our study all the ‘organization designers’ – i.e. the architects, facilities managers and senior managers - were men. While this gender representation is typical of the architecture profession (Caven *et al.*, 2016)³ and the UK public sector, further studies could usefully consider workspaces where women feature significantly in the design teams. Such studies might elicit very different observations and thus, different theoretical interpretations.

³ See http://www.world-architects.com/architektur-news/insight/A_Short_Survey_of_Women_in_Architecture_2758