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GENDERED REFERENCES IN ORGANIZATION STUDIES

Barbara Czarniawska [a]
Guje Sevón [b]

[a] School of Business, Economics and Law, University of Gothenburg
Gothenburg Research Institute

[b] Stockholm School of Economics
Department of Management and Organization

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Barbara Czarniawska and Guje Sevón

Abstract

This text starts with counts of men and women authors quoted in some early and late works of organization theory. An analysis of works of classical authors, and of our own works, reveals that over the years the proportion of references to women's work has increased, although it is still far from half of the references. The text invites to a discussion about why women authors are systematically underrecognized, and initiates by listing some reasons for why full names in references instead of initials might enhance the proper recognition of research conducted by women.

Key words: gender, referencing, academic excellence, organization studies

Women and men authors in organization texts

The origins of this little study and this short paper are truly serendipitous. One of us (Barbara) was translating Karl Weick's *Sensemaking in Organizations* (1995) into Polish. Now, it so happens that people who are writing or speaking Slavic (and some other) languages need to know the grammatical gender of the thing or person mentioned in order to use the proper form of verbs and adjectives. An obvious resource was the reference list; alas, it contained only initials. And so a long, tedious job began. After having established the gender of all the authors quoted, sheer curiosity pushed Barbara to compare the number of women and men. The dominance of men was to be expected, but in what proportions? One-

third women and two-third men was the worst expectation.

The result was truly surprising! Women constituted only 22 percent of the quoted authors. At that point, we decided to compare early and late works of the classical authors of organization theory, James G. March and Karl E. Weick, to see how common this situation was, and to determine if it changed over time. For first historical comparison we chose Weick´s famous book, *The Social Psychology of Organizing* (1979):

WORK	**AUTHORS QUOTED**	**MEN**	**WOMEN**	**UNIDENTIFIED**
Karl E. Weick (1979) *The social psychology of organizing*	514	485 (94%)	27 (5%)	2 (0%)
Karl E. Weick (1995) *Sensemaking in organizations*	517	402(78%)	115 (22%)	0 (0%)

Table 1. Men and women authors quoted in Weick (1979) and Weick (1995).

Obvious improvement, but was it a norm, or was it an exception? Looking for an answer, we continued with James G. March's work. We begun with a classic, March and Simon´s (1958) *Organizations*. It was an arduous but interesting task to establish the gender of the authors. We had to examine many obituaries and photos, wondering all the while about the longevity of certain works and the short life of the others. We also developed sympathy for many an Englishman who preferred to hide a truly awful first name behind his initials. (Really, what

were those parents thinking of!) We then compared *Organizations* with James G. March's (2010) latest book, *The Ambiguities of Experience*, which was a much easier task, because this time March had entered first names in the Author Index. Here is the result:

WORK	AUTHORS QUOTED	MEN	WOMEN	UNIDENTIFIED
James G. March, and Herbert Simon, (1958) *Organizations*	1207	1112 (92%)	82 (7%)	13 (1%)
James G. March (2010) *The ambiguities of experience*	379	325 (86%)	54 (14%)	0 (0%)

Table 2. Men and women authors quoted in March and Simon (1958) and March (2010).

The results from 1958 were shocking. The results from 2010 were an enormous improvement, but not as much as we hoped. After all, Karl E. Weick had already cited 22 percent women in *Sensemaking in Organizations* in 1995. Something dramatic must have happened in the 1960s or 1970s, which made women write more and be citied more.

What remained, we thought, was to compare the classic books with more run-of-the-mill products in organization theory. For that purpose, we chose two books that we had edited: *Translating Organizational Change* (1996), and *Global*

Ideas (2005). The reasons for this choice were threefold. First, if there was a critique to be made, we should probably include ourselves. Second, women editors should play a role in encouraging women authors by citing their works. Third, as many authors – men and women – contribute to edited books, the proportions were probably more typical of the population of management scholars.

There was one disadvantage to our choice, however: We could not remove auto-references of all the contributors from the count, as we could in the case of March and Weick, because the list of references was common in both books. We decided on the half-measure of discounting all references to ourselves, given that many contributors to edited books quote the editors out of politeness.

WORK	**AUTHORS QUOTED**	**MEN**	**WOMEN**	**UNIDENTIFIED**
Barbara Czarniawska and Guje Sevón (eds) (1996) *Translating organizational change*	512	442 (86%)	70 (14%)	0 (0%)
Barbara Czarniawska and Guje Sevón (eds) (2005) *Global ideas*	533	403 (76%)	129 (24%)	1 (0%)

Table 3. Men and women authors quoted in Czarniawska and Sevón (eds) (1996) and (2005)

Let´s face it: It was a surprise, and not a pleasant one. There was undoubtedly some progress between 1996 and 2005, but not as much as one would wish. The notable increase of women authors in *Global Ideas* could possibly be explained by the fact that the books had contributors from anthropology, ethnology, and cultural geography, which usually employ more women than departments of management do; but both March and Weick quoted sources from many subdisciplines in social sciences, as well.

The Matilda effect in organization studies?

> In his autobiography *Enigmas of Chance*, mathematician Mark Kac described his 1980 trip to Poland to deliver the Marian Smoluchowski memorial address in honour of the almost forgotten physicist of the past. Kac attributed Smoluchowski's near obscurity in 1980 not to his death at age 45, nor to his long name, nor to his career in Eastern Europe, but to the 'Matthew effect' of having been eclipsed by Albert Einstein, who also worked on Brownian motion at about the same time. (Rossiter, 1993: 325)

So begins Margaret Rossiter's article on the Matilda effect in science. She reminded her readers about the origins of the expression, *Matthew effect*, coined by Robert Merton in 1968. Merton has studied Nobel laureates and learned that the less favored collaborator, if he or she escapes total posthumous obscurity, is barely mentioned in the other´s Nobel Prize acceptance speech or biography footnote. Merton called this phenomenon the Matthew effect, after the New Testament Gospel According to St. Matthew: "Whoever has, will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have

will be taken from them (13:12)."

Merton focused on the first part of the parable, the over-recognition of the already prominent or prominently placed. Those remembered often had previous reputations, positions in famous schools, and many well-placed disciples, all of which helped them to even greater fame. Rossiter decided to focus on the latter part of St Matthew's gospel, on the systematic under-recognition of those who do not have – often women. She called it the *Matilda Effect*, after Matilda J. Gage (1826–1898), who was an unappreciated US suffragist and an early sociologist of knowledge. Gage had criticized men for the tendency to prohibit women from reaping the fruits of their own toil and noticed that the more women worked, the more the men around them profited, and the less credit the women received. Indeed, had Smoluchowski (1872–1917) been a woman, she would have received no appreciation 60 years after her death.

Like us, Rossiter was curious to know if anything had improved over time. In her next study (1995), she focused on the period 1940–1972, which she considered the golden age for science in the USA – a period of record growth in money spent, persons trained, and jobs created in that country. Yet, she found that even when government officials advocated "increased womanpower", women did not share the benefits of growth. The number of women in teaching positions at universities rose from 12 percent in 1942 to 40 percent in 1946. But after the war, women were moved aside as universities sought to increase their prestige by raising salaries, reducing teaching loads, hiring more PhDs, and restoring faculty positions to men, many of whom were war veterans. In 1971, when liberal attitude and legislation of the 1970s could be expected to have a positive affect on women in science, the downsizing of science budgets had

begun.

As the social sciences – management and organization studies included – forever imitate natural sciences, most of Rossiter's conclusions can be applied to our discipline as well. Additionally, one could argue that although women in European sciences were allowed to play significant roles earlier than they were in the rest of the world (see e.g. Czarniawska and Sevón, 2008), it is currently the USA that offers models to be imitated in science.

It can be asserted that the proportion of references merely reflects the proportion of women in science, or at least it did in the years that Rossiter conducted her study and March and Simon edited their book. Not anymore. But it is true that the proportion of women in academia diminishes as one looks up the hierarchy. In that sense, the Matthew effect is still valid; women who are better known also acquire more recognition. Maria Skłodowska is quoted more than Pierre Curie is. We would not dare to oppose the truths found in the Bible, but nevertheless think that less ambitious measures can be undertaken to make the situation more equal. As to our wishes, 50–50 would be a desirable result. What can be done?

What is to be done?

Societies need to be changed, but there are easier ways. Provide full names in references, for the start. There are several reasons to do so:

1) This is what a complete bibliographic reference should look like. In fact, University of Chicago Press, APA, and *Organization Studies* never permitted

initials only. The practice of quoting initials comes from natural sciences, in which papers can have up to ten co-authors, and from the time when space was limited by paper. Yet when we informed the editors of (certain) management and organization journals of this state of affairs, we were told that "this is how the publisher wants it". Well, insist that the publisher change!

2) Full names in references will demonstrate women's contributions to the management and organization literature. Some of our US colleagues have argued that revealing women's first names will diminish their chances of being cited (see also Judge et al., 2007). This tactics probably imitates measures taken by women fiction writers (with the initials of JK Rowling vividly discussed most recently, see e.g. *The Irish Examiner*, 10 March, 2015). Like us, many debaters, point out that not revealing women's first names will perpetuate the status quo. At any rate, it is understandable that young researchers are concerned about the possibility of being ignored, but women with tenure ought not to have such worries. On the other side of the age divide, young researchers, men and women, are used to the increased presence of women in academia, and should have no problem quoting women's work.

We are fully aware that many first names are ambiguous, but thanks to Google it is relatively easy to check one's gender (or, in case of transsexuals, the chosen gender) on a photo. Ambiguity often provokes curiosity!

3) Full first names in reference lists (and in the text, when appropriate) should favor men with such common last names as Smith or Brown, Svensson or Karlsson, Nowak or Kowalski.

4) Last but not least, it will render much easier the lives of translators into languages with grammatical genders.

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