

Joan Acker's Influence on Management and Organization Studies: Review, analysis and directions for the future

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Abstract

This paper pays tribute to Joan Acker by discussing how her ideas have been utilized in Management and Organization Studies (MOS). Through a systematic review of journal articles citing Acker's scholarship from 2000 to 2017 (September), we show how recent scholarship has used Acker to advance discussions in the field and examine how her work was received, and which promises made by her work are still to be met. We identify avenues to carry her legacy forward with a view to realizing the transformative goal she posed as central to meaningful change in social, political and economic life through scholarship in the field of gender and organizations.

Keywords

Acker, gendered organizations, ideal worker, inequality regimes, MOS

1 Introduction

Joan Acker has been an influential scholar in debates about gender and organizations. Drawing on her background as a sociologist and her interest in organizational analysis, Acker developed some of the most insightful theoretical frameworks for discussions in the field of gender and organizations, initially focusing on the gendered substructure of organizational life (Acker, 1990, 1992) to then ask more fundamental questions about the gendered and racialised nature of capitalism and globalisation (Acker, 2006a). Her theory of gendered organizations and her discussions of race, class and gender as intersecting systems of

oppression gained her widespread recognition in Management and Organization Studies (Martin & Collinson, 2002), and for many scholars, discovering her work has represented a pivotal moment in the development of their thinking about gender and organizations.

There is no greater accomplishment in academia than to influence others with one's ideas and work. In this paper, we pay tribute to Joan Acker by discussing the influence of her ideas, more specifically how they have been utilised in Management and Organization Studies (MOS). With this paper, we engage with calls for scholars of gender and organization to “‘strike out’ on their own, ‘boldly going’ into unfamiliar territory, carrying a healthy disregard for established boundaries and assumptions” (Martin & Collinson (2002:249; Martin, 2003). We do so not only by examining how recent scholarship has used Acker in such ways, but also identifying avenues to carry her legacy forward with a view to realise the transformative goal she posed as central to meaningful change in social, political and economic life through scholarship in the field of gender and organizations.

We take this paper as an opportunity to examine how her work was received and which promises made by her work are still to be met. To this end, we draw on Oswick, Fleming & Hanlon's (2011) framing of theory-borrowing practices in organization and management, we explored the following three questions:

- (1) What theories and concepts have MOS scholars borrowed from Acker's scholarship and how have scholars use these theories and concepts?
- (2) In what ways, if any, have Acker's ideas contributed to novel theorising about gender in MOS research? In respect to this question, we were particularly interested in the transformative capacity of Acker's ideas —is there any evidence that scholars have made her ideas their own by re-configuring and expanding them?
- (3) What does past usage of Acker's contributions suggest for future research and theorising?

We interrogated our questions through a systematic review of journal articles citing Acker's scholarship from 2000 to 2017 (September). At the outset, we must acknowledge that we conducted a selective review which is described fully in the methodology section. Hence, our review is subjective in the sense of the choices we made and represents only one of many possible interpretations of how Acker's theorisation has influenced the MOS field. Our review reveals the extent to which her ideas have been used by scholars and our analysis confirms the epochal significance of Acker's theory of gendered organizations in providing

MOS scholars with a powerful analytical tool to disrupt the gender neutral perspective of organizations as rational entities, void of structural inequalities.

As we will show in subsequent sections, our review documents the adoption of Acker's theory of gendered organizations as well as the concept of inequality regimes which she introduced in 2006. We found these two influential theories to be the most prolifically used by MOS scholars. This does, however, only capture a specific aspect of her work. Her earlier work on the sex structuring of organization and comparable worth (e.g. Acker & van Houten, 1974; Acker, 1989) has not been as prominent in MOS –some notable exceptions include Grimshaw (2000); Zetlin & Whitehouse (2003); Rubery, Carroll, Cooke, Grugulis & Earnshaw (2004); Bendl (2008); Fairhurst (2009) and Noback, Broersma & Dijk (2016). Similarly, her work on gender, capitalism and globalisation (e.g. Acker, 2004) has not been picked up comprehensively in discussions –again, notable exceptions are Frenkel (2008) and Metcalfe & Woodhams (2012).

The paper is organised in five sections. Following this introduction, we position the paper discussing gender research in MOS to then discuss Acker's theory of gendered organizations and where it both fits as part of this tradition and how it advanced from it. We then explain the methodology of our review. Next, we discuss what our review reveals about how scholars have utilised Acker's theorisation to understand and explain gender in MOS. The last section of the paper presents some concluding ideas and identifies avenues for advancing scholarship based on the work and legacy left by Acker.

2 Gender research in MOS

Understanding the monumental significance of Joan Acker's contribution requires a brief review of the evolution of gender research in MOS. For the most part, questions of gender along with race, class, ethnicity, and sexuality were largely absent in theorising management and organizations. Gherardi (2002) notes that unlike other disciplines like history and literature, organization theory has been slow in adopting a gender perspective. A number of recent reviews provide excellent insights into the 50-year trajectory of the research on gender in organizations (e.g. Broadbridge & Hearn, 2008; Alvesson & Billing, 2009; Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011; Calás, Smircich & Holvino 2014; Ely & Padavic, 2007; Joshi, Neely, Emrich, Griffiths, & George, 2015; Paludi, Helms-Mills & Mills, 2014; Powell, 2014). These reviews demonstrate that since the emergence of the study of gender in MOS, the field has

experienced a persistent tensions between individual/micro-level and structural/macro-level explanations for gender inequality in organizations.

We can trace back the first questions about gender equality in the workplace to debates in the United States about how to achieve it and legislate it. The key question at the centre of these debates was: Should gender equality be achieved by treating women the same as men or treating women differently? This question has a contentious background emanating from the first and second waves of feminism, which shaped how scholars subsequently engaged with the question in the academic arena. The First Wave of Feminism focused on the struggle for voting rights and was premised on a bourgeois conception of gender equality (McLaughlin, 2003). Based on an overly deterministic analysis of patriarchal oppression, these feminists aimed to create a new political identity for women (Scott, 1988; McNay, 2003).

Subsequent discussions in the 1960s, in particular the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963, ushered a Second Wave of Feminism, introducing the idea of women as a cultural product (Andermahr et al., 2000). This wave consisted of two separate political movements with divergent perspectives on how to achieve gender equality in the workplace (Nicholson, 1997). Liberal feminists who were part of the Women's Rights Movement comprised mainly of middle-class white women argued that although protective labour laws provided alleviation for the most vulnerable women from oppressive and exploitive workplaces, such laws reinforced the idea of women being fundamentally different from men (Nicholson, 1997:1). They feared an acceptance of sex differences could be used to subordinate women in the workplace and called for *sameness of treatment*—that men and women should be considered equal in a country espousing equality and freedom for all (Fineman, 2009; Rottenberg, 2014).

In contrast, the Women's Liberation Movement argued for gender equality from a *difference perspective*, proposing that the marginalization of women required different treatment to achieve equality (Nicholson, 1997). Proponents believed recognition of deeply embedded principles of social organization that oppressed women while privileging men was key to achieving gender equality (Nicholson, 1997:3). The sameness-difference debate reached its height during deliberations on the Civil Rights Act in the United States in the 1960s (Deitch, 1993). Ultimately, the inclusion of sex discrimination in the Civil Rights Act was a significant indicator of how the United States viewed gender equality. According to Deitch

(1993), the inclusion of a prohibition against sex discrimination signalled equality (i.e. sameness of treatment) was the preferred strategy for securing women's rights in the workplace.

An equality strategy did not recognize structural inequalities or the way in which institutions are fundamentally gendered. Instead, "it only promised equality to those women already most like men in relation to employment" (Deitch, 1993:200). Legislatively, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protected women from sex discrimination. Hence, achieving gender equality was primarily about removing discrimination against women to enable them to partake in available opportunities. The dominant liberal view of gender equality muted other feminist perspectives, particularly radical, Marxist, socialist, and cultural. It also resulted in the exclusion of women of colour with little recognition of the intersection of gender with other categories of difference.

The influence of the sameness-difference debate on the path of gender research in MOS is a reflection of the hegemony of the United States in management theory (Meriläinen, Tiernari, Thomas & Davies, 2008; Westwood, Jack, Khan & Frenkel, 2014) and can be seen in how early scholarship on women in management and organizations took its cues from this debate. An overwhelming amount of this scholarship was produced by scholars in the West. Scholars pursued two research paths during the 1970s and 80s that remain evident in the field today (Alison & Glass, 2014; Calás, Smircich, & Holvino, 2014; Ely & Padavic, 2007; Joshi, et al, 2015). One path focused on documenting the plight of women and the barriers they encountered in gaining access to management and leadership positions in organizations; while a second path explored male and female differences in attitudes, motivation, behaviour, leadership styles, preferences and other variables (Ely & Padavic, 2007; Joshi et al., 2015; Riger & Galligan, 1980). Both trajectories rely primarily upon individual/micro-level theories. Sex role stereotyping and gender role theories were dominant in explaining the barriers women experience as well as behavioural differences between men and women in organizations. For the most part, the problem of gender inequality in organizations was assumed to be an individual-level problem (see Reskin, 2005). First, in the sense that men and women differ in fundamental ways; and second, sex discrimination and prejudice against women were attributed primarily to actions of individuals.

3 Acker's theory of gendered organizations

We contextualise Acker's problematisation of gender and organizations as emerging from the heart of the debate about sameness and difference. However, this dichotomisation in itself did not appear to work for Acker and we would argue that the development of her theory of gendered organizations, as we show in the next section, looked to present a more nuanced understanding of the issue, one that moved beyond an individual-centred approach and instead included it within the context of institutional/structural processes and dynamics.

Epistemologically, gender was largely measured as a demographic variable equating it with biological sex (Ely & Padavic, 2007). Structural or macro-level explanations for women's experiences in organizations were rare, implicitly assuming the problem did not lie at the organization level. Or, as Calás, Smircich & Holvino (2014:20) observe in their review, "micro-level approaches assume organizations are 'neutral containers' in which sexed/gendered individuals interact." However, some structural perspectives on gender equality (e.g. Kanter, 1977; Hearn & Parker, 1983; Cockburn, 1983; Mainiero, 1986; Martin, 1990) were present in MOS research prior to Acker's (1990) theory of gendered organizations. For example, Kanter's (1977) influential study demonstrated the structural conditions explaining differences in the status of men and women in corporations (Paludi et al., 2014); while Joanne Martin's (1990) article illustrated how male domination of organizations required women to fit in at all costs. However, it was Acker's 1990 article that provided scholars with a theory that explained organizations as gendered phenomena (Martin & Collinson, 2002). Her theorisation represented an epochal break from understanding observed differences between men and women as innate, and the assumption that women had equal opportunities to succeed in the workplace.

Acker (1990) provided scholars with a powerful analytical tool for disrupting the idea of gender neutral organizations in MOS. In a sense, Acker (1990) helped to concretize the abstractness of structural barriers to gender equality in the workplace. Her theorising provided a means to identify and label the taken for granted, ordinary organising processes and practices that reproduce gender inequality in organizations. This paved the way for research largely from North American and European scholars that challenged individual/micro level explanations for gender inequality and the persistent marginal status of women in organizations. What followed was a number of contributions from management scholars placing emphasis on the social construction of gender in organizations, the

embeddedness of power in gender relations, and processes and structures that subordinate women and privilege men (e.g. ; Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998; Calás & Smircich, 1996; Gherardi, 1995; Martin, 1993; Martin, 1994; Mills & Tancred, 1992). According to Martin & Collinson (2002), Acker's 1990 publication marked the birth of the 'gendered organization' field.

In her second most influential work, Acker (2006b) extended her work on gender inequality to incorporate race and class to introduce the concept of inequality regimes. This might be seen by scholars who had long argued that gender could not be interrogated without attention to other axes of subordination and oppression as a rather late incorporation to her ideas (e.g. Adib & Guerrier, 2003; Bell, Denton & Nkomo, 1993; Bell & Nkomo, 1992; Crenshaw, 1991; hooks, 1981; Nkomo, 1986). Nevertheless, the concept of inequality regimes specified an intersectional perspective on how gender, race and class and other forms of inequality are mutually produced and reproduced in organizations. Its import was highly relevant to the MOS field which had generally ignored questions of class and race (Bell & Nkomo, 1992; Essed, 1991; Nkomo, 1992; Acker, 2000; Grimes, 2001; Scully & Blake-Beard, 2006).

4 Methodology

There is no doubt that Joan Acker was a prolific scholar and this is not only evidenced by the large number of citations of her publications, but also by how her work defined the field of study of gender and organizations. For instance, at the time we conducted our review, two of her articles alone: '*Hierarchies, jobs, and bodies: A theory of gendered organizations*' and '*Inequality Regimes: Gender, Class & Race in Organizations*' had alone a total of 7,585 citations, according to Google Scholar.

We focused our search on citations of her work in articles published in MOS journals. Because searching the large number of MOS journals would be a daunting task, we decided instead to identify a manageable set of articles that could provide us with a basic understanding of how scholars have used Acker's theories and ideas. We searched for a relevant sample of articles by selecting MOS journals with an A* or A ranking on the ABDC Quality List published by the Australian Business Deans' Council. The rationale for this was that there is the assumption that these "top journals" are viewed as publishing leading edge, original research, which could be seen to provide a good means to ascertain how scholars used her theories to make unique contributions to MOS. We acknowledge that our approach

does not provide a census perspective of all the articles published in the MOS field that have productively used Acker's theories. We do believe our focus on top journals is at best indicative of how scholars have utilised Acker in management and Organization Studies but it is by no means definitive of all possible uses because of the large number of journals and other outlets for research (i.e. book chapters, books).

Our selection criteria resulted in a sample of 47 journals (see Table 1). We then searched each journal for the period 2000 to 2017 (September) to identify articles that cited Acker's research. A total of 457 articles were identified.

Table 1. List of journals

Journal name	Rank ^a	Number of articles
<i>Academy of Management Annals</i>	A*	5
<i>Academy of Management Discoveries</i>	A	0
<i>Academy of Management Journal</i>	A*	3
<i>Academy of Management Learning and Education</i>	A*	4
<i>Academy of Management Review</i>	A*	9
<i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>	A*	8
<i>British Journal of Industrial Relations: An International Journal of Employment Relations</i>	A*	4
<i>Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice</i>	A*	5
<i>Human Relations</i>	A*	17
<i>Human Resource Management (US)</i>	A*	6
<i>Industrial and Labor Relations Review</i>	A*	2
<i>Journal of Applied Psychology</i>	A*	1
<i>Journal of Management</i>	A*	1
<i>Journal of Management Studies</i>	A*	3
<i>Journal of Organizational Behavior</i>	A*	3
<i>Journal of Vocational Behavior</i>	A*	5
<i>Organization Science</i>	A*	4
<i>Organization Studies</i>	A*	10
<i>Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes</i>	A*	0
<i>Personnel Psychology: A Journal of Applied Research</i>	A*	2
<i>Strategic Management Journal</i>	A*	0

Journal name	Rank^a	Number of articles
<i>The Leadership Quarterly</i>	A*	3
<i>Academy of Management Perspectives</i>	A*	2
<i>Asia Pacific Journal of Management</i>	A	0
<i>British Journal of Management</i>	A	19
<i>California Management Review</i>	A	0
<i>Gender, Work and Organization</i>	A	254
<i>Group Organization Management: An International Journal</i>	A	1
<i>Harvard Business Review</i>	A	0
<i>Human Resource Management Journal (UK)</i>	A	4
<i>Human Resource Management Review</i>	A	1
<i>International Journal of Human Resource Management</i>	A	14
<i>International Journal of Management Reviews</i>	A	10
<i>Journal of Business and Psychology</i>	A	1
<i>Journal of Management Inquiry</i>	A	3
<i>Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology</i>	A	2
<i>Journal of Small Business Management</i>	A	1
<i>Management and Organization Review</i>	A	0
<i>Management International Review</i>	A	0
<i>Management Learning</i>	A	5
<i>MIT Sloan Management Review: MIT's Journal of Management Research and Ideas</i>	A	0
<i>Organization: The Critical Journal of Organization, Theory and Society</i>	A	40
<i>Organizational Dynamics</i>	A	0
<i>Personnel Review</i>	A	4
<i>Research in Organizational Behavior</i>	A	1
<i>Research in the Sociology of Organizations</i>	A	0
<i>Strategic Organization</i>	A	0
Total		457

^a 'In 2007, ABDC established the ABDC Journal Quality List for use by its member business schools. Most universities adapt the list to suit individual university requirements. The ABDC Journal Quality List 2013 comprised 2767 different journal titles, divided into four categories of quality: A*: 6.9%; A: 20.8%; B: 28.4% and C: 43.9%. *Journal lists should be a starting point only for assessing publication quality and should not constrain researchers to a particular domain*' (Source: <http://www.abdc.edu.au/pages/abdc-journal-quality-list-2013.html> (accessed 31 October 2017)).

Figure 1 provides a graph of the trend in the number of citations in the 47 journals from the period 2000 to 2017 (September). There were a total of 562 citations as some articles cited more than one Acker publication. As the graph indicates, citations of Acker's work in the 47 journals increased gradually from 2000, accelerated in 2009 to reach its highest citation level in 2015.

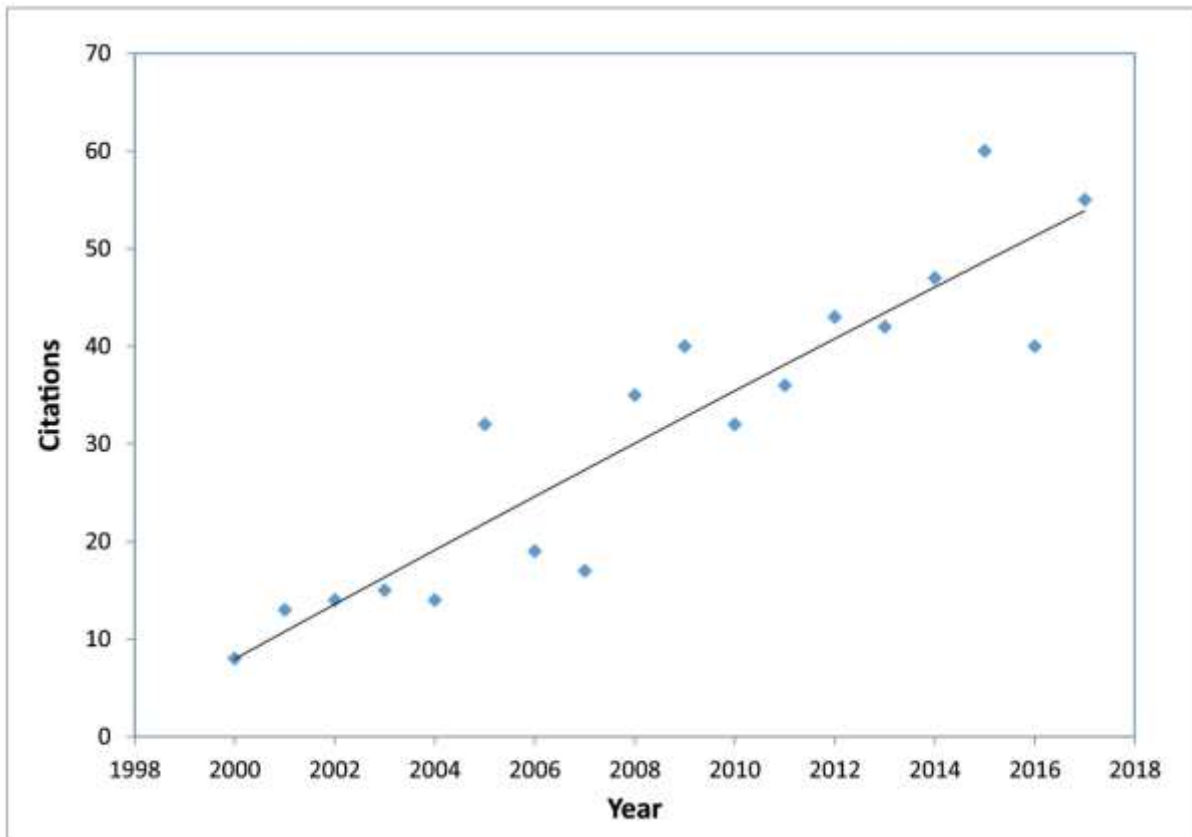


Figure 1. Trend line of Joan Acker citations 2000–2017

Next, we read each article to determine the dominant topics and theories or concepts used by the author(s) to ground the research undertaken. We first open coded the topics of the articles and then grouped them into aggregate categories. Figure 2 provides an example of the process we followed. This process resulted in 29 aggregated topic categories.



Figure 2. Example of data structure for coding of research topics

Table 2 provides a list of the dominant topics researched in the articles. The top five topics were gender and work/family issues; gender & identity, women’s career experiences (professional, managerial, and leadership), masculinity, and gendered inequality practices.

Table 2. List of aggregated topic categories

1. Gender and work/family issues
2. Gender and identity
3. Women's career experiences (professional, managerial and leadership positions)
4. Masculinity
5. Gender inequality practices in organizations
6. Doing gender
7. Embodiment of gender
8. Intersectionality
9. Gender equality/equity
10. Gender change/changing inequality
11. Diversity management
12. Gendered wage gap
13. Sexuality at work
14. Resistance politics
15. Gender and age
16. Entrepreneurship
17. Gendered management theory
18. Gendered workplace organizing
19. Postfeminism
20. Gender quotas
21. Disabilities
22. Class inequality
23. Care work
24. Low wage workers
25. Dirty work
26. Ethnic minority inequality
27. Gender mainstreaming
28. Sexual harassment
29. Whiteness

Next, we turned to an analysis of the theories utilised in the publications. Table 3 provides a list of these theories in descending order of usage in the articles. Gendered organization, inequality regimes, ideal worker, hegemonic masculinity, and intersectionality were the top employed concepts and theories appearing in the articles. Acker’s work on gender and capitalism, gendered pay, and sex structuring of organizations (i.e. Acker & van Houten, 1974; Acker, 1989; Acker, 2004) was less cited in the articles reviewed. Next, we independently open coded how authors used each of the theories, focusing particularly on the scholarly contribution claimed in the article. For example, we read as a set all of the articles

using Acker’s gendered organization theory to ascertain how it was used by authors. We did this for each concept or theory listed in Table 3. From there, we discussed and reconciled our interpretations. We then aggregated our interpretation into three major themes that captured how scholars had used Acker’s theories and concepts as well as the claimed contribution.

Table 3. Dominant Acker theories and concepts

1.	Gendered organization
2.	Inequality regimes
3.	Ideal worker
4.	Hegemonic masculinity
5.	Disembodied worker
6.	Gendered pay
7.	Gender and capitalism

5 Findings

Our review identified three different ways in which authors used Acker’s work. They differ in the way they integrated her work as well, as in the overall contribution outlined in the papers. Of those who drew more explicitly on Acker’s work, we identified three key concepts used: ‘gendered organization’, ‘inequality regimes’, and ‘ideal worker’. We illustrate these three primary usages for the most dominant theories and concepts in Table 3.

First, some articles simply referenced an Acker concept when framing an understanding of gender, but her work was not central to the main contribution of the article. For example, using Acker to define the concept of gender (e.g. Alsos & Ljunggren, 2017), to position gender scholarship within the article (e.g. Lyness & Kropf, 2005; Abendroth, Melzer, Kalev & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2017) or to recognise its affinity with other bodies of work, such as identity, leadership, organizational change. (e.g. Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Roberts, 2005; Roberts, Dutton, Heaphy & Quinn, 2005; Reedy, 2008; Cook & Glass, 2011; Marshall, 2011; Ashcraft & Muhr, 2017; Knights & Clarke, 2017).

This type of usage appeared to be more prevalent in what might be considered mainstream MOS journals among the 47 journals listed in Table 1 rather than those with a critical orientation or specialising on gender and organizations. Second, authors used an Acker concept or theory to explore a particular topic or to apply it to a new sample or to examine it in a different context. Examples of this are a demonstration of academia as a gendered institution (e.g. Manchester, Leslie & Kramer, 2013; van den Brink & Benschop, 2014;

Treviño, Balkin & Gomez-Mejia, 2017) or researching an understudied demographic group (e.g. Kamenou & Fearfull, 2006; Young & Powell, 2015; Shantz, Wang & Malik, 2016; Murray & Ali, 2017).

In this usage the authors positioned the contribution of the research as an empirical specification of the meaning of an Acker concept or theory or the illustration of its applicability in a different context. The third usage we identified was linking an Acker concept or theory to other theoretical concepts to build an integrated framework for the published research or to introduce a new construct. From our review, authors taking this approach were more likely to claim a novel contribution by demonstrating how blending Acker's ideas with other concepts, particularly feminist, critical, social constructionist, poststructuralist, and postmodern perspectives, enriched explanations of a particular organizational phenomenon or resulted in the development of a new concept. However, the largest number of articles were in the second category; this is, they used an Acker concept or theory to explore a particular topic or to apply/test it to a new sample or context.

5.1 Gendered Organization

In most cases, articles alluding to the notion of gendered organization use the term to legitimise the assertion that organizations are gendered. In that respect, most works used Acker's idea as a starting point to position their articles within what we could term the Ackerian theoretical standpoint that recognises that gender is embedded in social structures and institutions. In particular, the idea of the structural articulation of inequality was alluded to in relation to how gender acts as an inescapable force that shapes processes and systems in organizations (see for example, Metcalfe & Woodhams, 2012; Nemoto, 2013). Looking more closely at papers that engaged more dynamically with Acker's idea, we encountered articles that used a similar framing to the one Acker (1990) used; this is, the articles in this group could be separated into three distinct subgroups: ones that focused on structures and bureaucracies (hierarchies), others that focused on occupations (jobs, professions and careers) and a final, less prevalent group, that focused on individuals (bodies).

The first subgroup focusing on bureaucracies adopted a critical approach that in most cases linked Acker's theory to other theoretical frameworks to illustrate how gender pervades organizational structures, dynamics and processes. These types of articles looked to enrich gender scholarship through establishing linkages with other theoretical frameworks that could

help to elucidate research problems in particular disciplinary areas. For example, Pfefferman et al. (2015) present us with an effort where they connect neo-institutional statist literature with Acker's notion of gendered organizations to map out the relationship between gender, state and entrepreneurship. In their paper, they challenge the notion of the neutrality of state bureaucracy, highlighting that states' gender-neutral economic agendas are in fact gendered and lead to gendered access to resources. Similarly, Nielsen (2017) link Acker's notion of gendered organization with the capabilities approach developed by Martha Nussbaum (2000) and Amartya Sen (1993) in order to create a dual framework that brings together the gendered nature of agency inequalities.

The second subgroup, focused on institutional factors to understand how they affected particular groups in terms of career development and progression. An important feature of these articles was that they sought to use the notion of gendered organizations as a framework for understanding the relationship between gender and organizational processes that limit opportunities. In particular, they draw on Acker's (1990) idea that the concept of job is implicitly gendered despite how it is presented by organizational logic as gender neutral (p. 149) and extend this to focus on occupations and careers (e.g. Mallon & Cohen, 2001; Chênevert & Tremblay, 2002; Sools, Engen & Baerveldt, 2007; Donnelly, 2015). For example, drawing on Acker's ideas in their analysis of women's frayed careers, McKie et al. (2013) put forward a framework of careerscapes, which brings together the notion of careers and, using the analogy of landscapes, positions them within a socio-economic and geographical interpretations of scapes in order to build "a framework to identify rhythms and helps us to redefine the organizations of the 21st century" (p. 194). The intellectual contribution of articles in this group lays on attempts to expand the theoretical scope of Acker's ideas to particular fields of enquiry. Another notable example is Pringle et al.'s (2017) article where they use Acker's ideas to explore how gendered and classed processes impact the career progression of women lawyers.

We explore the third subgroup, those who focused on individuals (bodies) in the last subsection of the findings, where we discuss the ideal worker. It is worth noting that whilst the notion of the ideal worker was developed by Acker as part of the integrated framework of gendered organizations, as it will be shown, our review suggests that this notion has been captured independently by scholars to illustrate, in particular, the embodiment of masculinity in the way particular occupations are understood (e.g. Johansson, 2016).

5.2 Inequality regimes

A majority of the articles using inequality regimes as a theoretical framing fell under the second category of usage whereby the concept was applied to an underexplored context or sample. For example, samples within this group of articles ranged from the diamond industry to religious institutions to cluster or industry level (e.g. Sharp, Franzway, Mills & Gill, 2012; Greene & Robbins, 2015; Handy & Rowlands, 2017). Another set of articles claimed novelty by examining inequality regime practices in non-Western contexts (e.g. Frenkel, 2008; Turbine & Riach, 2012; Grünenfelder, 2013). Some articles (e.g. Tatli, Nicolopoulou, Özbilgin, Karatas-Ozkan & Öztürk, 2015) focused on particular occupational groups, looking to understand the challenges inequality regimes posed to their roles. While Acker's inequality regimes centres on race, gender and class, the contribution of a few articles focused on what was positioned as neglected categories of inequality. This to say, this notion of inequality regime was rarely picked up and only a few articles focused on neglected categories (e.g. Williams & Mavin, 2012). In that respect, despite Acker's (2006) own acknowledgement that, "other differences are sometimes bases for inequality in organizations" (p. 445), her own categorical choices appear to have been reproduced as scholars drawing on her work mainly focus on this triad. These articles examined inequality at the intersection of gender and class, gender and age, gender and national culture, and gender and disability, what Benschop & Doorewaard (2012) call the gender^{plus} approach. However, there was scarcity of articles examining categories adopting a simultaneity approach. This suggests that despite Acker's advancement of the mutually constitutive nature of these categories of inequality, empirical examination remains a challenge. Indeed, there was one conceptual article in our review (see Holvino, 2010) that offered a framework for a simultaneity approach to the intersections of race, gender and class.

Fewer articles were placed in the third usage category where the concept of inequality regimes was linked to another theory or concept to expand Acker's conceptualisation. Two contribution arguments were advanced in these types of articles. First, linking inequality regimes to another concept or theory allowed for greater explanation of a phenomenon (e.g. Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012). Some of the theories linked to inequality regimes included Bourdieu's theory of capitals, postcolonial theory, Fairclough's comprehensive social theory, agency theory, Lefebvre's spatial theory, identity work, and network theory. For example, Wasserman & Frenkel (2015:1485-1486) supported their linkage of Lefebvre's spatial theory to gender and class inequality in organizations arguing that while studies of inequality in

organizations have shown that the workplace is an important arena for the production and reproduction of gender, class, ethnic, racial and other categories of difference, it has neglected the growing important role of spatial and aesthetic aspects of organizations as markers of inequality. In sum, they suggested that the concept of inequality regimes did not offer a systematic theoretical account of the role of space.

In the second approach, the linkage to another theory or concept resulted in the contribution of a new concept. An example of this is Murray & Syed (2010) who combined Acker's inequality regimes theory with the "lenses through which gender differences are interpreted and understood" (p. 277). The authors identified and conceptualised from previous literature and data three types of lenses: monocultural, statistical and structural to introduce the concept of gendered lenses. Murray & Syed (2010) introduce and define the concept of gendered lenses as: "common world views through which gender relations are fixed and understood, which in turn influence social patterns of behaviour within organizations and wider society. The authors further state, "Our contribution lies in examining gendered hierarchies and masculine managerial controls through gendered lenses. In this study, we have outlined how scholars might analyse and review inequality regimes through the monocultural, statistical and structural lens" (p. 290).

5.3 Ideal Worker

The main contribution found in articles using Acker's concept of 'ideal worker' was to empirically demonstrate its manifestation in an organization or a particular occupation. For instance, some works (e.g. Mescher, Benschop & Doorewaard, 2010; Gatrell, 2011; Gatrell, Cooper & Kossek, 2017; Stumbitz, Lewis & Rouse, 2017) discuss ideas of the ideal worker in the context of pro-masculine capitalism, linking it to expectations such as full-time visibility, availability and mobility that disadvantage women, particularly mothers. There were a number of articles that focused on illustrating the expectations of an 'ideal worker,' particularly highlighting the types of images that pervade specific roles and occupations (e.g. Clarke, Brown & Hailey, 2009; Anteby et al., 2016; Ruiz Castro & Holvino, 2016) and its negative effects on the status and experiences of women (McDonald, Bradley & Brown, 2008; Billing, 2011). The notion of the 'ideal worker' was applied mainly to samples of managers, leaders, professionals, and people in extreme jobs, but less so to workers at the lower end of the hierarchy – notable exceptions are Denissen's (2010) article looking at tradeswomen, apprentices, and pre-apprentice job-seekers in the building trades in the US,

and Byant & Jaworski's (2011) article about the gendering of skills shortages in Australian mining and food and beverage processing industries. We found fewer articles on how the ideal worker impeded males in organizations or the effects of the contemporary decline of the male breadwinner model on embedded masculinity in organizations (e.g. Kelan, 2008; Ladge, Humbred, Watkins & Harrington, 2015). There were also a few articles focused on resistance to ideal worker expectations. These articles provided empirical studies of the ways in which both men and women strategised to resist the expectations and strictures of the ideal worker (e.g. Greenberg & Landry, 2011; Katila & Meriläinen, 2002; Reid, 2015).

Articles linking the ideal worker concept to other theoretical concepts were scant but sought to provide deeper insight into the notion that organizational roles carry explicit and implicit images and characteristics of the kinds of people that occupy them. For example, Meriläinen, Tienari, & Valtonen (2015) linked Acker's ideal worker concept with embodiment, aesthetics and the senses to "illustrate how various senses are intimately involved in the performance of embodied actions and in their evaluation: tactile movements (body postures), sound (voice, respiration, clack of shoes), touch (handshake) and scent (perspiration, use of perfume)" (p. 6).

6 Concluding points and future directions

In respect to our original questions, our review found that gendered organization, inequality regimes, and ideal worker were the most dominant concepts used in the articles in the 47 journals we examined. The articles using Acker's work covered a wide range of topics with the most prevalent being gender and work-family issues. We also examined how scholars used Acker's theories and concepts as well as the claimed contribution. The articles primarily contained applications of Acker's theories and concepts to a particular sample or context. Thus, the contribution might be viewed as the testing of or empirical examination of her theories versus expanding or building new theory. The latter usage was rare in comparison. Generally, our review suggests that scholars have focused on research that shows the many different ways organizations are gendered or sites of inequality.

This finding has implications for the future of the study of gender in organizations. First, future research should focus less on demonstrating the existence of gendered organizations and more on theorising changing gender inequalities. We found only a small number of articles using Acker's theories and concepts to theorise changing and resisting gendered

practices. In sum, our review suggests MOS scholars have done a good job of using Acker's theory to unveil the ways in which organizations are gendered or act as sites of inequality but less to develop theory for achieving equality and social justice. Given indications that gender equality progress appears to be stagnate some scholars propose we shift our attention towards the practical question of how to create non-oppressive organizations and institutions (e.g. Benschop, Mills, Mills & Tienari, 2012; Britton, 2000; Pullen, Rhodes & Thanem, 2017). A few scholars assert a postfeminist lens may enable us to move beyond interpreting women's positions in organizations solely in terms of *exclusion* connected to a dominant masculine norm (Billing, 2011; Lewis, 2014). For example, Lewis (2014) argues that examining how femininity impacts women's work and organizational experience can assist in contemporary understandings of women's inclusion in the workplace.

We should point out there were also a number of other topics that were less present in our review. It raises the question of whether we have set the boundaries of gender and organizations too narrowly or whether we have succumbed to the pressures of incremental gap finding (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007). The low frequency of Acker citations in what can be described as 'mainstream MOS journals' on our review list suggests Acker's theory of gendered organizations has been embraced largely as a narrow or sub-area specific theory rather than a broad theory with generic application across the many MOS domains (Oswick, Fleming & Hanlon, 2011). The proposition that organizations are fundamentally gendered phenomena would seem essential to any efforts to understand them as well as the people and processes within them. However, its analytical potential does not appear to have been fully realised, with evidence of the need for a more imaginative, integrated and nuanced approach to the use of gendered organizations beyond the legitimisation of the idea that organizations are gendered (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013). This is particularly picked up by Rodriguez (2013) who notes that, "there is clear potential for further exploration of similarities and differences through the use of a combined framework that brings together organizational historiography, personal histories and a framework to explore the multidimensionality of gender in organizations; such as Acker's (1990) theory of gendered organizations."

The same applies to Acker's concept of inequality regimes based on the intersections of race, gender, and class. Scholars have noted the continuing struggle to hold this lens on our research (Holvino, 2010; Nkomo, 2013; Rodriguez, Holvino, Fletcher & Nkomo, 2016). From our review, it is also important to develop research methodologies for examining the

simultaneity of categories of differences that recognize the fluidity, hybridity and complexity of identities as well as their interactions with systems of dominations (Dhamoon, 2011).

There is some skepticism as to the goals of mainstreaming in the field (Martin & Collinson, 2002; Benschop & Verloo, 2006). In particular, this could be linked to the tensions between gender equality and mainstreaming identified by Walby (2015:321-322); two important tensions are whether the vision of gender equality invoked by mainstreaming draws on ideas of sameness, difference or transformation, as well as what type of relationship is established between gender and other inequalities. Both of these would have implications for the way gendered processes are tackled with a view to a radical transformation that redefines work and work relations (Acker, 1990).

Our view is that, if we consider the extent to which gender and organization research has demonstrated strong empirical evidence refuting the neoliberal premise that organizations are rational, neutral institutions where everyone has an equal opportunity; then we cannot abandon the goal of mainstreaming this powerful idea. From our review, we believe we need to be even bolder in our epistemological stance; if we accept that people, structures, processes, practices and systems simultaneously interact to create organizations and workplaces, then any theorising or study of organizations would be invalid if it excludes gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexualities and the broader capitalist, colonial, postcolonial and transnational context in which organizations exist. This broader context gives meaning to power and subjectivities and social relations among organizational actors as well as interrogating possibilities for change and social justice. We are suggesting that MOS scholars need to make more revolutionary use of Acker's ideas –for instance, she argued that “the underlying construction of a way of thinking is not simply an error, but part of processes of organization” (1990: 154) and that “globalization is about class, race/ethnic, and gender relations: it is political and cultural, as well as economic (2004:18).

It is precisely this which should invigorate us to challenge how we think about gender-neutrality in organizations; the inadequacies in our theorising needs to be addressed with more daring thinking. We need to strike out more boldly to include critical theory, postmodern, poststructuralist, new materialism, decolonizing approaches and feminist theory in our work. Otherwise, we run the risk of leaving intact the institutionalised notion that organizations are neutral sites unfettered by questions of gender, race, ethnicity, class,

sexuality, able-bodiedness, oppression, and inequality. This would pick up on Acker's fundamental point that there needs to be radical critique and engagement. Do we need any more impetus than the resurgence of right-wing populism, racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia and nativism to recognise the continued urgency of disrupting the pretense that organizations are sites of equal opportunity and inclusivity? (Lowery, 2016; Reynié, 2016; Zakaria, 2016).

One final direction of fundamental value is the way in which Acker's ideas are embedded in educating both students and the next generation of MOS scholars. In her introductory piece to the Missing Feminist Revolution Symposium, Acker (2006c) argues that the feminist revolution that would bring about change to "central conceptualisations of economy, state, class, race, religion, etc., as well as theories of societal structuring and change" (p. 445) has not happened. She saw this as a failure of course offerings, textbooks and reading lists that simply do not include gendered processes or do not integrate gender as a principle of societal structuring processes. She also attributed this to the failure of academics to engage more comprehensively with the ways gender serves as an organising principle of social, economic, political and organizational life. We would argue that 10 years on, it still has not happened! In the case of MOS, there has been resistance to making gender in organizations or diversity modules mandatory in the management and business school curriculum which has severely hampered the ability to reach students (e.g. Mills, 1997; Perriton & Reynolds, 2004; Bell, Connerley & Cocchiara, 2009).

Acker (2006c) suggested the need to re-think basic concepts and question the "usefulness of pervasive distinctions such as macro/micro or levels of abstraction" (p. 446) and perhaps the way to translate this challenge in practical terms is by using her frameworks of gendered organizations and inequality regimes in a more integrated way. There is immense potential in using Acker's ideas to scrutinise key debates prevalent in MOS, such as the gendering of management, the role of gendered assumptions and dynamics linked to globalization and transnational processes of power and subordination, and how they play out in organizations, as well as other more contentious issues such as the relationship between gender, capitalism and class, and a more nuanced understandings of gender and race relations in neoliberal organizations.

We want to stress and acknowledge that what we present is a selective review of how Acker's theories have been used in MOS. We acknowledge that other approaches and different sampling, as well as even a larger range of publications could yield alternative perspectives. Furthermore, we believe that by providing transparency about our approach and the list of journals we reviewed, our interpretations and analysis can be scrutinised. Nonetheless, we hope this paper provides MOS scholars with some material for reflecting upon the work of Joan Acker and its importance and influence, as well as energises them to continue debating her ideas and advancing her legacy.

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