ABSTRACT

WORKING IN GENDERED ORGANIZATIONS

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The aim of the paper is to participate in the emerging conceptual discussion on power in gendered work organizations. The paper is based on my extensive, ongoing ethnographic studies in clerical and white-collar work organizations in Finland. My analysis also makes use of the results of qualitative research on gender and work-related inequalities in Finland after World War II.

The ethnographic follow-up studies are based on the conceptualisations around “doing gender” and “gendering organizations”. The studies result in questions that concern theoretical considerations, methodological solutions and future research topics.

The topics that I find crucial when studying power and doing gender at work, or gendered organizations, have to do, first, with skills and qualifications; secondly, with the symbols in the organizations; and thirdly, with technology. Theoretically, it is very important to consider what kinds of subjectivities are produced in the present-day working life from the point of view of gender. Aspects of the body and emotions are of significance in developing the perspective of “doing gender”. Methodologically, research relationships shape the results concerning the practices of doing gender in organizations.

The analyses of qualitative research on gender and work-related inequalities in Finland show that everyday practices contribute to the formation and maintenance of unequal divisions between women and men. These practices are not necessarily consciously intended discrimination. Rather, they are taken for granted and remain implicit. The point is that the employees like to maintain harmony in their closest social environment. Furthermore, there are also other issues that the employees hardly mention in Finland. These silences revolve around sexuality and the body, or the symbols of sexuality and the body. The challenge is to study the power of gendered silences in organizations.