

# The gendered aesthetics of the physical environment of work

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## Abstract

While the literature on organizational aesthetics has placed special emphasis on the role of space in constructing social hierarchies and on processes of inclusion and exclusion of various identities, very little attention has been paid to gender identities and women's experiences within organizational workspaces. This chapter suggests a typology of three main theoretical trajectories to examine various ways in which workspaces become gendered and offers some theoretical arenas to be further developed in the future.

## Introduction



Do men use space differently than women? Many of us are familiar with the situation depicted in the drawing above. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, this phenomenon—nowadays termed “man-spreading”—refers to “the practice whereby a man, especially one on public transportation, adopts a sitting position with his legs wide apart, in such a way as to

encroach on an adjacent seat or seats.” Public awareness of this gendered spatial practice was raised in 2013, when many social media websites initiated a feminist campaign against man-spreading and precipitated vigorous public debate in New York, Madrid, Toronto, and many other cities, some of which has brought about official bans on man-spreading in city transport, especially on trains and buses. Does man-spreading also occur in organizational spaces and in daily work situations? Do men and women differ in their spatial practices within the office space? Do men tend to take up more space than women, or do they differ merely in the ways that they territorialize their work environment? Are there gender differences in all cultures?

Expansive body postures (such as open legs, legs on the desk, spread hands, and more) were found to be linked to greater feelings of power and dominance. The symbolic meanings of those postures have attracted the attention of many psychologists and communication researchers (e.g., Henley, 1977), but were overlooked in the context of work environments. Since even in modern, Western societies, young girls and women are often encouraged (even if not explicitly) to take up less space than boys (Trethewey, 1999, Bird & Sokolofski, 2005), and given the fact that the literature on proximities and personal space shows that women’s boundaries are not as respected as men’s, causing their personal space to be invaded more easily (Jane, 2017; Puwar, 2004), it is unlikely that workspaces are an exception.

Examining work settings as sites where many forms of gendered spatial practice take place draws our attention to power relations and status differences as they are reflected in organizational spaces and bodily territoriality (Bartky, 1990:74). Specifically, though women are nowadays much more integrated in organizations and their status has improved, focusing on spatial/aesthetic aspects allows us to expose the implicit, tacit ways in which women may be marginalized, and to expose how workplaces in all societies are still fairly gendered.

Critical research in organizational aesthetics has expanded this theoretical trajectory and placed special emphasis on the role of space in general—and open-space designs in

particular—in the construction of social hierarchies and in processes of inclusion and exclusion of various identities, including gender (e.g., Dale & Burrell, 2008; Wasserman & Frenkel, 2011). While this scholarship reveals how design styles, colors, shapes, furniture, textures, and other spatial elements transmit messages regarding how employees are supposed to feel and behave in a specific surrounding, very little attention has been paid to gender and women’s experiences within organizational spaces.

Based on the growing literature on organizational aesthetics (Dale & Burrell, 2008; Strati, 1996; Taylor & Spicer, 2007; Warren, 2008), this chapter aims to illuminate the various ways in which the physical work environment is segregated according to gender, how it is experienced by men and women, and how it is enacted by them. Specifically, the chapter suggests a typology of the literature on gender and organizational aesthetics by pointing to three main theoretical trajectories and then offering some theoretical arenas to be further developed in the future. In order to highlight the gendered biases of contemporary workplaces’ layouts, I will focus mainly on open-space settings and cubicles by using illustrative examples both from literature and from my own experience in several organizational sites.

**a. The aesthetics of separation: Segregated workspaces**

One way in which organizational aesthetics becomes a means to “genderize” workplaces is through physical separation/segregation—that is, to separate women’s and men’s areas. However, most studies focusing on the various ways in which women are excluded in organizations do not relate to spatial segregation, under the assumption that it is no longer relevant today. Indeed, while in the past women were limited to at-home, unpaid jobs and were excluded from organizations and from the public sphere in general, we have witnessed in recent decades a process of desegregation in the labor market, and gender equality in organizations has been enhanced. However, by using a spatial lens and examining the

historical development of spatial segregation within organizations, one sees that gender segregation still exists, though in different forms, mainly through job segregation.

Only a few decades ago, women were excluded from the central organizational space by various mechanisms of zoning and separation, including separate entrances, isolation, and physical partitions between men and women. Their entry into the labor market not only created gender-segregated spaces, but a unique aesthetics typical of women's areas has also been implemented—one that is based on stereotypical perceptions of gender and femininity. For example, at the beginning of the 20th century, when many women began working as service clerks and secretaries, their work environment was designed as spatially fixed (for instance, chairs and desks were fixed to the floor), tied to their machines and work positions, while men (mainly as managers) enjoyed work spaces that allow mobility and flow in space (Boyer, 2004). Nowadays, with the gradual disappearance of formal gendered zoning in modern organizations, spatial segregation has become subtle and is manifested mainly through the occupational distinction between “men's jobs” (often senior positions) and “women's jobs” (mainly junior positions) (Deemer, Thoman, Chase & Smith, 2014; Nash, forthcoming; Twomey & Meadus, 2016).

The tendency of men and women to do different work, a phenomenon often labeled “occupational segregation,” remains one of the most persistent problems in gender equality even today (Gomberg-Muñoz, 2018). Secretaries, cashiers, teachers, and nurses are still the most common positions for women in the year 2017<sup>1</sup>. In many organizations this occupational segregation is not only reflected but also reproduced in many organizational layouts through spatial segregation based on space allotment according to rank and/or status. Managers and high-status jobholders are overwhelmingly male and thus often placed in enclosed, large, and private offices, whereas the supporting, low-status staff are predominantly female and are

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<sup>1</sup> See for instance in the USA: [https://www.dol.gov/wb/stats/most\\_common\\_occupations\\_for\\_women.htm](https://www.dol.gov/wb/stats/most_common_occupations_for_women.htm)

mostly located in open spaces that are small and lack privacy (Baran & Teegarden, 1987; Paliadelis, 2013; Sundstrom & Sundstrom, 1986; Wasserman, 2012). Since space allotments in contemporary organizations are often based on rank and status (Elsbach, 2003), which, in turn, often follow gender divisions, the unintended consequence is often that such allotments are not gender-neutral. In other words, although architects and managers do not deliberately design the organizational layout to reflect gender inequalities, the separation of “closed-door jobs” from “open-floor jobs” cloaks contemporary practices of gender exclusion and reinforces status differences (Spain, 1993; Wasserman, 2012).

Further, while the initial concept of open spaces aimed to enhance equality and communication, open spaces are often criticized for their noise and lack of privacy, which interferes with the concentration of workers, their ability to have interpersonal interactions with colleagues, and their well-being and general comfort (Elsbach & Pratt, 2007; Kaufmann-Buhler, 2016). The gap between the improved physical conditions of closed, private offices and the less desirable ones of open spaces arouse, in some cases, severe dissatisfaction and frustration on the part of employees who are located in those spaces. In organizations where a clearer gender division of labor is evident (for example, hospitals), many women (especially those of low status) are located in substandard spaces (Kaarlela-Tuomaala, Helenius, Keskinen & Hongisto, 2009).

One such example can be found in an extensive study I conducted on the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (see Wasserman, 2012; Wasserman & Frenkel, 2015). For its relocation to a new facility, the ministry’s architects and management placed much emphasis on power and status symbols. Thus, as is common in many organizations, the dominant logic driving the allotment of space followed a hierarchical order. Specifically, senior employees (i.e., diplomats or managers) were located near the windows, in closed rooms, and on a high, spacious, and prestigious floor. Junior employees (administrative staff or junior diplomats) were located in the

center of the floor in open, simple, small, and visible cubicles. This allegedly “neutral” logic has caused (even if not deliberately) a gender-segregated space that places many women (those who are not diplomats) in spaces that are inferior in terms of size, surveillance, aesthetics, and privacy. The separation carried symbolic and emotional implications, as it mirrored organizational hierarchies and power relations and was manifested in additional spatial practices. For instance, women in cubicles were subjugated to anyone passing by and felt themselves to be under constant surveillance, a situation that resulted in many women testifying that they felt anxious about their own aesthetics (their dress and bodily postures) during the day. Further, the lack of privacy, the inability to control the desired temperature of the air conditioning, the bolting of furniture to the floor, the high level of noise, disturbance, and visual ambience in the open-plan areas had increased their sense of distress (they even named their area a “ghetto”) and de facto had reinforced their exclusion. Even though these may be seen as problems that are not necessarily related to gender, in this case it was clear to all interviewees (men and women alike) that the number of women in the open cubicles is much larger. Further, since most of them are not part of the diplomatic staff — and thus are not expected to be promoted to senior positions — they are destined to remain in these spaces throughout their entire working life.

Although most of the literature on gender-spatial separations concentrates on occupational segregation, some studies show that gender segregation also exists between women and men who are employed in the same job or occupation. In the 1970s, researchers in the United States were already pointing to the tendency of men employed as sales clerks to be concentrated in high-end, relatively high-status stores, while women in the same occupation were concentrated mainly in discount or department stores (Talbert & Bose 1977). Although this sector, and the employment market in general, has changed significantly in recent decades, the preservation of status gaps between men and women employed in the same

profession or role is expected to preserve the hierarchical division of the spaces between them. In a much more recent study, Johansson & Lundgren (2015) describe gender segregation in a Swedish supermarket that was divided into a pre-store (outside the store), where only women worked, and the inner space of the store, where both men and women work together (and where a job rotation practice was customary). The study showed that this spatial separation created a hierarchy among the workers, whose perception was that the pre-store is a peripheral and inferior space—in effect, a dead-end. Women who worked in this space perceived it as a space of high pressure and abrasive routines.

#### **b. Aesthetics as a gendered experience**

A second way in which organizational aesthetics may become gendered is associated with the different ways in which men and women experience their surroundings. Organizational buildings have long become tools for making work more efficient by turning them into homogenous, standardized, and transparent spaces, without taking into consideration differences in gender (or ethnicity, culture and age). In many workplaces, the internal walls and partitions have been removed, with the intention of creating a work environment that will allow people to work flexibly according to projects and tasks. But this has also resulted in turning the workspace into a “gaze-able,” watchable sphere in which some are more subjected to surveillance than others. Studies show that these are not experienced as culture-neutral (see, for example, Ayoko, Härtel & Charmine [2003] on the role of cultural norms in the experience of spatial layout and in interpersonal conflicts in workgroups) or gender-neutral. Generally speaking, women tend to assess their workspaces more critically than men (De Been & Beijer, 2014).

One of the few studies to explore the gendered experience of the physical work environment is that of Hirst and Schwabenland (2018), who examined the embodied experience of women in a

UK authority office that moved to a new building with open cubicles. The authors showed that female employees associated the new office with a nudist beach-type feeling, whereby they were exposed to a male gaze. As a result of being constantly watched, women were dressing more smartly in the new office, signaling their status through their attire. The researchers concluded that while some women felt discomfort about their visibility and others enjoyed it, there is no doubt that organizational spaces are gendered in many different ways.

Tyler and Cohen's (2010) study reached similar conclusions. In their research, the authors initiated a focus group exposing 30 women to an artist clip that was presented in an exhibition in a gallery in London, and which described a comic office situation. The focus group was designed to trigger emotional responses to organizational aesthetics and to generate gender-related associations with the women's own daily experience in their office space. Based on Butler's performativity and on Lefebvre's concept of lived space, Tyler and Cohen detail several sources of women's frustration in organizational spaces. First, they illustrate how women described feelings of constraint in standardized, transparent workspaces, typically open cubicles, amplifying claustrophobic feelings and the inability to develop a sense of belonging to what they perceived as a "masculine environment." They show that many organizations are designed with power symbols for transmitting to their clients and employees feelings of prestige and high status, but these are not interpreted as gender-neutral symbols. Second, women portrayed their experiences in terms of both invisibility and over-exposure, reflecting their feelings in regard to their (lack of) right to space, privacy, and distinctiveness. Third, as suggested by the drawing at the beginning of this article, many women reported a sense of spatial invasion and "spillage" of their male office partners, both symbolically and physically. Many of Tyler and Cohen's interviewees felt that their male colleagues take up much more space than they do, that their desks are much messier than their own, and that they feel they



are expected to make their work environment welcoming and pleasing for their male colleagues.

The most prominent challenge facing many women is the increasing demand of organizations to stay in the office for long hours, to subordinate their personal/private concerns to those of the organization, and to blur the distinction between home and work, especially for highly skilled workers. Since women still bear the primary responsibility for household affairs, they are most often the victims of increased organizational control over workers' time and space (Collinson & Collinson, 1997). Thus, women (especially young mothers) prefer private spaces where they can talk to their children, their parents (for whom they are often the caregivers), and the babysitter, as well as address other daily routine arrangements for which they are responsible at home. But the open-cubicle layout makes this much more difficult, and the result is that they feel their privacy has been significantly invaded (Wasserman, 2012).

These experiences are likely to intensify for young women who are breastfeeding. When they are required to pump milk during working hours, they may feel particularly exposed to the gaze of others in their workspace, especially when it is an open or semi-open space. In such cases, women are forced to search for empty rooms, cars, toilets, and temporary hiding places—a circumstance that is likely to increase their sense that they lack the right to space, as well as their inability to develop a sense of belonging to the physical work environment and to the organization in general (Johnson & Salpini, 2017).

Nevertheless, even in more everyday cases, studies show that women and men tend to interpret and experience organizational aesthetics in different ways. One such explanation may stem from Berdahl & Anderson's (2005) study, in which the authors argue that women tend to favor egalitarian norms in work groups and therefore tend to divide space in a more equal manner, whereas men prefer hierarchical power relations and thus tend to occupy as much space as possible for themselves. Other studies found that women tend to gravitate toward

homey and intimate designs with bright colors, whereas men tend to prefer dark colors, larger rooms, high-status symbols, and prestigious furniture pieces, particularly those incorporating leather and wood details (Pressly & Heesacker, 2001). Since most office layouts are set up in a more traditional and hierarchical style favoring men's preferences (especially in high-status jobs such as lawyers and accountants), women are likely to feel uncomfortable with this kind of organizational aesthetics.

Whether men and women differ in their preferences or whether it is a myth or a result of social construction (Massey, 1994), the common belief is that there is a difference between "masculine design" and "feminine design," each of which dictates how men and women are expected to feel in each of these designs. While tall buildings, linear and angular lines, and phallic symbols signify masculinity, rounder, softer lines are often seen as more feminine in character. These widespread views are further reinforced by architects, designers, and other professionals, who tend to express themselves in this manner when explaining their architectural choices to the general public. Since people are subjected to these common images—which are further reinforced and reconstructed by films, books, and other cultural means (Panayiotou, 2015)—it is reasonable to assume that experiences of aesthetics are not gender-neutral. In the following discussion, I will elaborate on how and why future research in organizational studies should delve deeper into the non-neutral styles of design and the emotions they trigger in various social groups.

### **c. Aesthetics as a gendered enactment of space**

A third trajectory of studies referring to the gendered aesthetics of organizations has emerged in recent years following the shift in the field of organizational aesthetics from an emphasis placed on space as a container of organizational practices and identities toward a processual understanding of the production of organizational spaces—namely, "spacing" rather than

“spaces” (Beyes, 2010; Beyes & Steyaert, 2012; Vásquez & Cooren, 2013; Wasserman & Frenkel, 2011). These studies argue that spatio-organizational analyses should focus on the *processes* at work in determining the ways in which employees, managers, clients, and other users of a specific organizational space enact space in a dynamic process of negotiation and continuous movement between complying and resisting it, how various actors within the organization take part in designing their own spaces, and how they perpetuate or change spatial boundaries and restrictions.

Various studies point to the ways in which employees mark their distinctiveness and try to embody their identity and feelings through crafting their own spaces within the organization. Many of these studies point to the ways in which employees, especially women, domesticate and personalize their offices as a strategy by which they feel more “at home” in their work environment and achieve a sense of belonging to the workplace (Elsbach, 2003; Shortt, Betts, Hofbauer, 2000; Kanter, 1977; Warren, 2008; Wasserman, 2012). Wells’s (2000) study showed that women not only tend to personalize their offices much more than men, but that their style of personalization is different. While the motives of women in personalizing their offices are to express their individuality and their emotions as well as to feel better, men who personalize their offices do so to show their status. Thus, women tend to display symbols of personal relationships (photographs with family, friends, pets, etc.) as well as items associated stereotypically with “femininity” and with domestic-themed items (such as plants, trinkets, knick-knacks, or art), whereas men tend to exhibit sports-related items and markers of their achievements (such as diplomas and various certificates). Similar findings were described by Goodrich (1986), who observed that women tend to personalize their surroundings with aesthetic items (such as plants, posters, and personal items), whereas men tend to personalize their offices with items illustrative of their achievements. Dinc (2009) provides a possible explanation for this gender difference, arguing that women are characterized by attachment

motives (creating a “home-away-from-home” atmosphere in their offices), whereas men are characterized by ownership motives (showing off their status and making a place their own).

Domesticating space is a unique way of spatial enactment that is not only aimed at enhancing individual feelings of home, comfort, and belonging to the organization; it also serves as a means of constructing a sense of identity and identification with the organization (Shortt, Betts, & Warren, 2013). Since domestication and personal items displayed at work often trigger conversations and spontaneous interactions that connect different people, they should be perceived as both an individualistic and a collective act that establishes a communal identity in the organization. Therefore, they are of great importance in shaping the experiences and relationships of employees with others and with the organization in general.

The differences between “female” and “masculine” styles of space enactment are also reflected (and further reconstructed) in films, as documented by Panayiotou (2015), who demonstrates that offices of female senior executives are often represented as colorful, decorated, domestic environments. She argues that “female” designs that typically blur the difference between offices and living rooms should be interpreted as an act of resistance whereby women take ownership of the office space and turn it into a place of their own, to which they feel a sense of belonging and where they feel at home. A similar argument has been raised by Warren (2005) in a study of non-territorial workspaces, also known as “hot-desking”—that is, a spatial setting wherein desks are shared by many employees and no one has a permanent desk/work station. These aesthetic arrangements, which are becoming increasingly popular, pose a potential emotional threat to employees who are unable to exhibit their own physical “identity markers” (i.e., items that reflect the distinctive features of one’s identity, such as being a mother or an athlete—see Elsbach, 2003). To cope with these anonymous workspaces, many women tend to engage in what Warren (2005) has named “hot-nesting,” that is, they resist management’s

hot-desking instructions by sticking to their desks and marking them with their own items to re-establish a sense of belonging and distinctiveness.

Another way in which female employees reject the formality and anonymity of the office space is by displaying “office folklore” (cartoons, parodies, and sayings) in visible areas. In a case study focused on female researchers in an American university, Bell & Forbes (1994) argue that office folklore is used as a “survival kit ... as constant sources of laughter and entertainment, as escape valves and reality ‘checks,’ as reflections and fun-house mirrors of their organizational lives” (p. 186). The gendered enactment of artifacts, they argue, is aimed at subverting organizational control and the masculine discourse by displaying emotions usually perceived as illegitimate or inappropriate (e.g., rage, irrationality, pleasure, open criticism, and more).

The extent to which personalization is to be interpreted as a resistance tactic is questioned in Tyler & Cohen’s article, in which they contend that personalization is not only intended to create a sense of comfort and control, but also to comply with gender expectations of being perceived as an excellent “hostess.” Thus, women are expected to design an appealing, organized, comfortable, and inviting environment. By emphasizing how women take extra care when designing their work environment not to deviate from what they perceive as the unofficial instructions of the organization as to what is appropriate to their gender, Tyler & Cohen argue that organizational aesthetics is “a materialization of the cultural norms according to which particular gender performances are enacted, and through which adherence to those norms is signified, successfully evoking recognition of viable gender subjectivity” (p. 193). While some women consciously choose not to put into their workspace objects that reveal their family lives and to keep this aspect of their lives secret, they do not deviate much from gender expectations. Many of them exhibit objects that emphasize their skills (such as diplomas) and

portray them as professionals, but at the same time they display personal objects that reveal their identities and interests outside of work and portray them as “well-rounded.”

A previous study that I conducted with a colleague (Wasserman & Frenkel, 2015) on the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs corroborates these findings, differentiating between women of higher and lower status within the organization. By using the term “spatial gender-class work,” my colleague and I point to the ways in which women of differing class and status enact their spatial surroundings to reflect, perpetuate, and/or resist their organizational positioning. Inspired by the notion of “doing gender” (West & Zimmerman, 1987) and more recent ideas of “gender work” (Gherardi, 1994) and “class work” (Gray and Kish-Gephart, 2013), we demonstrated how upper-class women, who share a class habitus with upper-class men in top organizational positions, designed their offices through a specific type of spatial gender-class work, which we named “aesthetic work,” in order to distinguish themselves from lower-class women and to position themselves as professionals who are entitled to top positions. Their offices were very similar to those of men of equivalent status—that is, a formal and restrained design, neutral and non-gender-specific colors and pictures, and symbols that stress their senior professional status. On the other hand, women from the administrative staff filled their cubicles with colorful pictures, accessories, toys and trinkets, mirrors, drawings done by their children, and family photos, resulting in a “maternal aesthetics” that starkly challenges the planners’ efforts to eradicate indicators of femininity and domesticity. This means that compliance with gender expectations and the way in which employees shape and enact their space is not only gendered, but also influenced and constructed by other social belongings.

### **Concluding remarks and reflections on future directions of study**

In the final part of this chapter, I would like to point out some potential research directions that emerge from the typology I have suggested above and to elaborate on how each of three

trajectories—gender segregation of space, gendered experience of space, and gendered enactment of space—could be further advanced. My suggestions will rely mainly on the growing organizational literature on the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012; Dale & Burrell, 2008; Hancock & Spicer, 2011; Kingma, 2008; Taylor & Spicer, 2007; Wasserman & Frenkel, 2011, 2015; Zhang & Spicer, 2014; Zhang, Spicer & Hancock, 2008), which has, in my view, the greatest potential to push forward the “spatial turn” in organizational studies and to help us to develop a more nuanced and sophisticated analysis of organizational aesthetics and everyday spatial practices.

At the core of Lefebvre’s theory of space stands his distinction between three spaces—the *conceived space* (also known as “representations of space”: the planners’ discourse and conceptualization of space); *the perceived space* (also called “spatial practices”: the translation of the architectural discourse into material artifacts and users’ bodily gestures); and *the lived space* (also referred to as “the spaces of representation”: the users’ interpretations of space and the ways in which they experience and use it). Together these three spaces become a mechanism for reproducing power relations and constructing them as a taken-for-granted social order. Although Lefebvre has inspired a growing number of organizational researchers, especially those from the theoretical field of critical management, and although Lefebvre himself did refer directly to gender in his writings — arguing that spaces are shaped according to a masculine, phallic power — almost none of them has addressed gendered spaces (but see Hirst & Schwabenland, 2018; Nash, forthcoming). In what follows I would like to put forward some ideas on how to use Lefebvre’s theory to enrich each of the three above-mentioned trajectories and to deepen our understanding of the gendered aspects of organizational aesthetics. While the following discussion is research oriented, more practical implications for organizations to implement in their re-design processes may also emerge from the suggestions to follow.

The first trajectory discussed above refers to spatial segregation based on gender/occupational separation. While the most obvious suggestion to organizational managers might be to avoid any such spatial separations, in some cases women may *choose* it and even feel empowered in the company of women only, as advocated by some feminist movements (see Spain, 1993). Specifically, despite some of these efforts' success in increasing the visibility of women and feminist issues in a broader social struggle, organizational studies should define a set of criteria as to when such a separation perpetuates gender inequality and exclusion and in what circumstances it has the potential to reduce them. In order to expose the gendered assumptions of such a decision, we should inquire: Who initiated the separation? What was its purpose? How was it rationalized by the planners and the management? How do women interpret this decision? By applying Lefebvre's conceived space in a feminist analysis, we can adopt a more political perspective, questioning the architectural and managerial discourses: their rationalizations and ideologies as to how space should be divided, who should get more space in the organization, and how offices should be designed and with which colors and materials. If, for instance, managerial/architectural discourse is phallogentric (i.e., space allotment is based on hierarchy and/or achievements, disregarding gender differences and division of labor), a unified conceptualization of space and male-centered planning processes will inevitably perpetuate women's invisibility and inequality. As suggested earlier in the chapter, managers should avoid spatial allocation based on rank and hierarchical position, since these decisions are never gender-neutral.

The second trajectory I indicated above suggests that organizational aesthetics is not experienced as gender-neutral. Despite some studies that have acknowledged that space is not homogeneously interpreted, most studies do not distinguish between different social groups, men and women, and users from different cultures (nor do the architects and managers involved in planning programs). To integrate the limited literature on culture-based



and gendered experiences of space (including perceptions regarding territoriality, privacy, artifacts, symbols, interpersonal distance, etc.), I suggest incorporating more insights from the growing interest in diversity as well as in intersectionality within organizations (Brah and Phoenix, 2013), which has yielded abundant empirical studies and documentations of the different experiences of women of color, women of different national and ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, diverse religions and religiosity, and different class or professional backgrounds. By integrating insights from the literature on intersectionality into the literature on organizational aesthetics, we could avoid the homogenization of the essentialist category “women” and develop a much more nuanced perspective on the ways in which space is lived and experienced by women of various social groups. I believe that qualitative/hermeneutic methodologies are more sensitive to the amplitude of emotional and cultural narratives and thus are more suitable for studies of this kind.

Managers can also use insights from this theoretical direction, especially in a globalized world in which diversity management has become a significant managerial tool. Assuming that the spatial experience is not only different for women and men, but also among women of different cultures, managers must examine and consider the different preferences of these women and provide diverse spatial options to workers from different cultures.

The third trajectory—spatial enactment—forgoes the notion of space as a container of organizational processes and urges us to deepen our understanding of how men and women use space to comply with or resist managerial agendas and surveillance. Inspecting spatial enactment through the lens of power and resistance theory provides a particularly fertile ground for understanding the role of gender (and other identities) in perpetuating or changing social order within organizations. In recent years there has emerged a growing body of literature on the ways in which people resist anonymous and/or regulated spaces imposed upon them (Dale & Burrell, 2008; Shortt, 2015; Spicer & Taylor, 2006) and how space can enhance political

efforts (Courpasson et al., 2017), but none of them refer to gender. Drawing on Lefebvre's triad, Spicer & Taylor (2007) present a variety of spatial resistance tactics that can be further explored, such as sabotaging the spatial surroundings or escaping to liminal places—for example, hidden corners, stairwells, or toilets—where employees can gain a sense of privacy and evade the gaze of their managers, customers, or colleagues. Broadening this framework will, in my opinion, enrich our analytical perspective on the ways in which organizational spaces become gendered (Jane, 2017). For instance, Lefebvre's ideas of embodiment and spatial-practices can expose how artifacts are designed according to men's bodies. One anecdote that clarifies how the male body constitutes the standard on which the organization is based refers to a case that I encountered during my observations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where I saw that women deliberately avoid shaking hands when sitting around the impressive table in the conference room. When I asked them about it, they answered that the width of the table was designed so that two people could shake hands across it, but the height of those people was 1.75m. Since most women are shorter, they were forced to go around the table to shake hands. Thus, they avoided it as much as possible and advocated their refusal as a form of protest against this masculine architectural design. Recent studies have begun to acknowledge the theoretical potential of delving into these types of behaviors by examining the growing female protest against "man-spreading" and the ensuing changes in transportation policy in some cities (Jane, 2017). In organizations, too, a similar phenomenon might appear in the future, when female employees will resist the invasion of their space by their male partners and reclaim their right to shape their workspace according to their needs and preferences.

To sum up, aesthetics decisions within organizations form symbolic boundaries that become a key mechanism in the perpetuation of social inequality, direct and self-exclusion, and in the camouflage of power relations underlying the creation of spatial-social significance. Since

architectural decisions are often embedded in a specific culture (or gender, for that matter), the inevitable result is a gendered space that reinforces the separate identities and distinct work experiences of men and women in an organization, making the glass ceiling very clear to women—not merely metaphorically, but in a very tangible manner.

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